HM

THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE

Demon Hunter
Denison Witmer
Crimson Moonlight
The Almost
My Epic
Wrench In The Works
Anathallo
2008 Staff Picks

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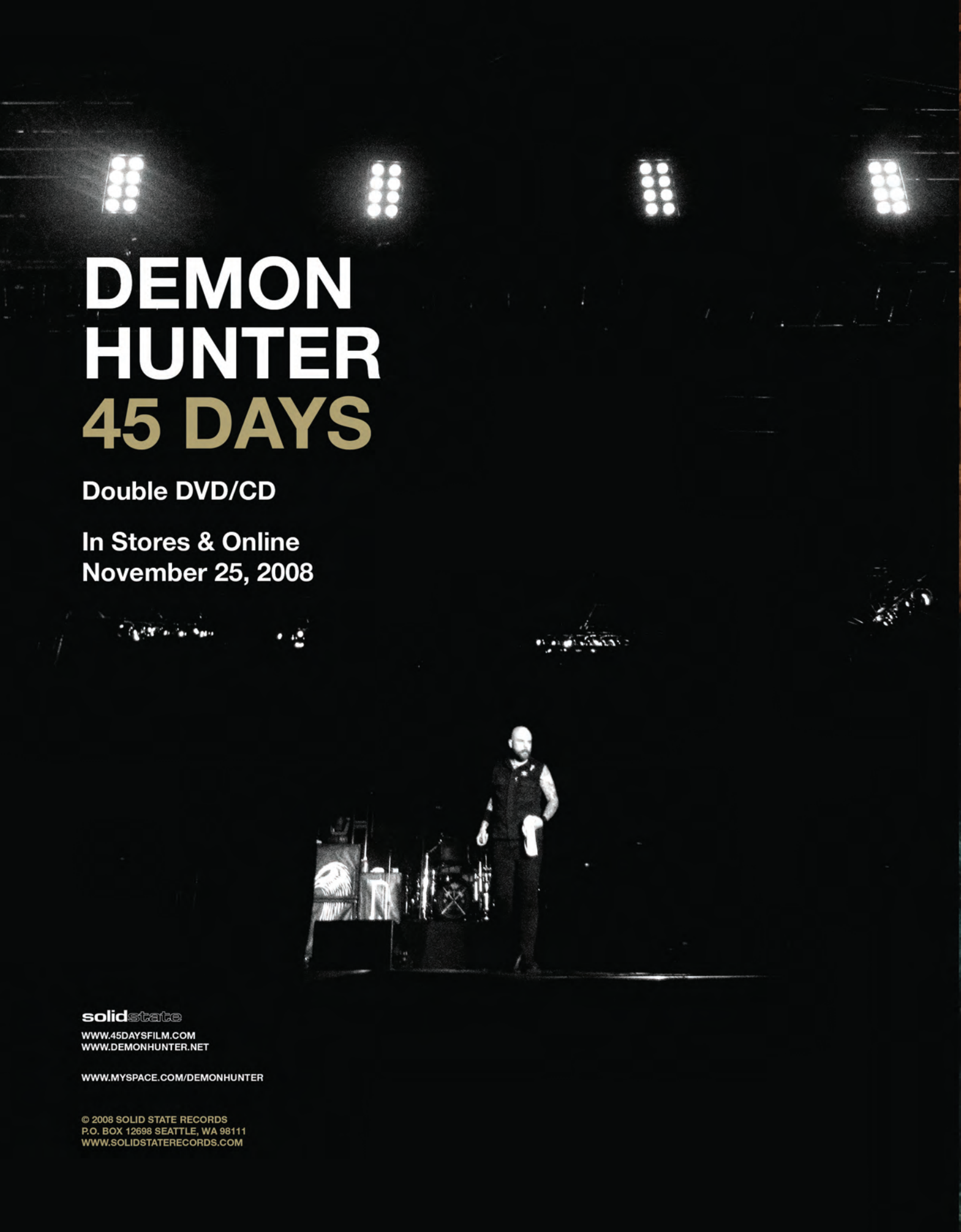

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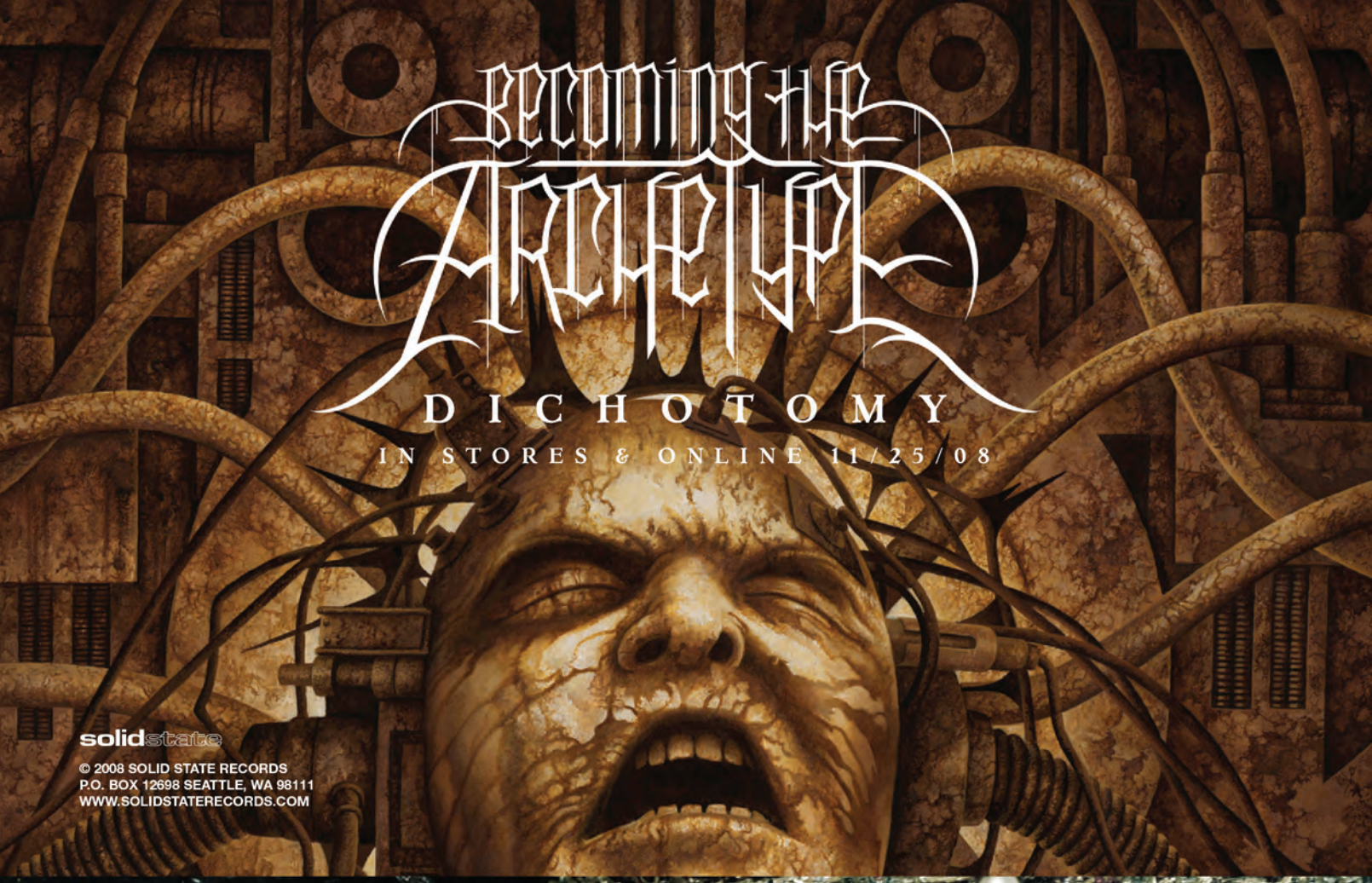

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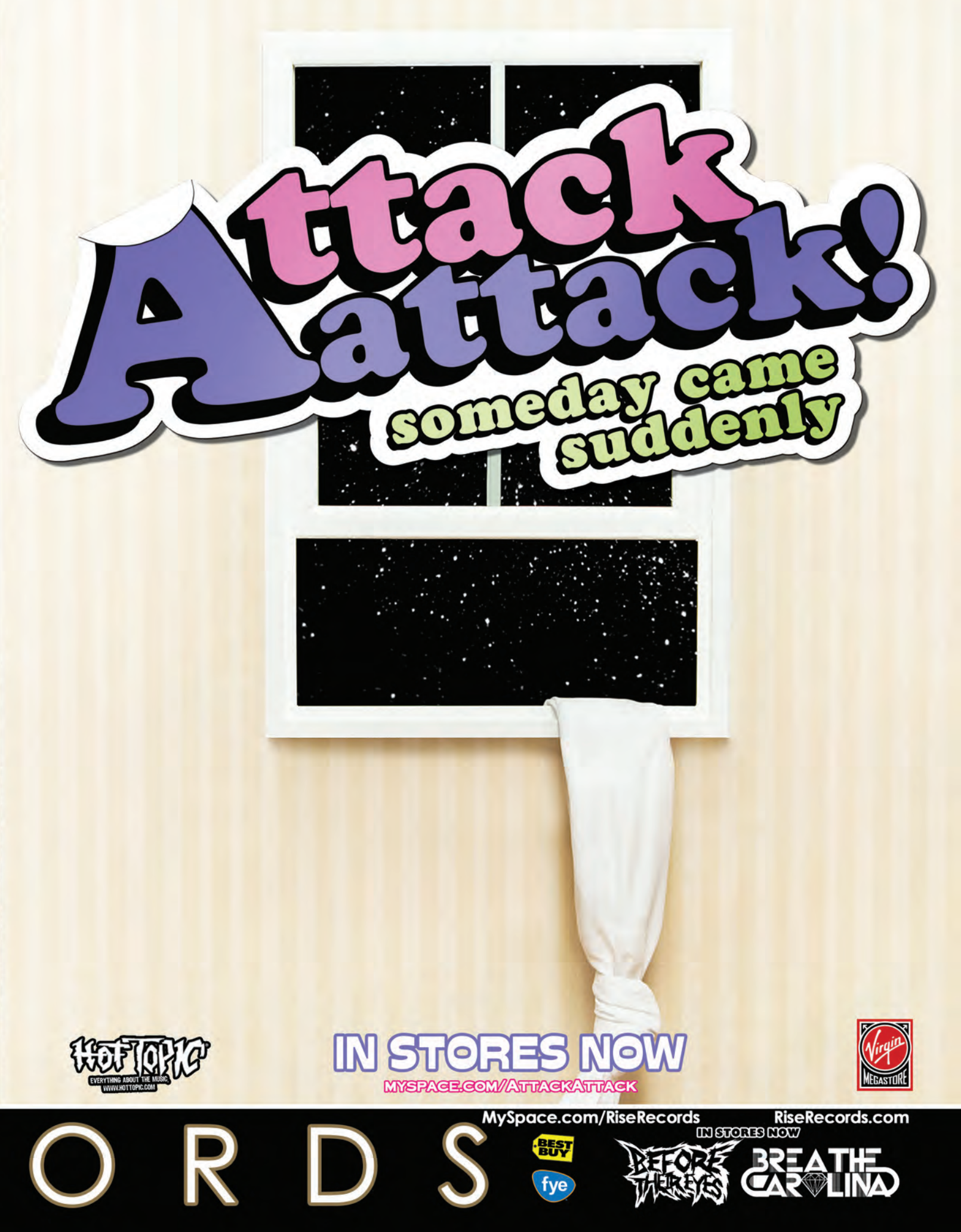
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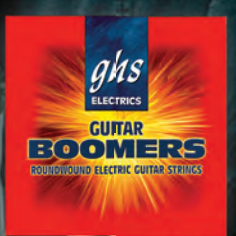

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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

I WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD

I want to see redemption happen; see people receive forgiveness; see life restored, one person at a time. I hope and pray that this magazine, its words, text and fonts on a page, can somehow help, bless and inspire others to keep on, to awaken a deep love for Jesus, and to change the world with me.

There, I said it. I think that this is possible. This is what I want and would like to achieve while, if at all possible, avoiding cheese.

In regards to this issue, I can't hide my enthusiasm for the Crimson Moonlight article that Anders Nordsrom penned and documented. He did an absolutely killer job, did he not? And with photos that good, it makes acidic black metal seem all the more beautiful, huh?

If you haven't voted in our online Readers' Poll yet (*hmmag.com/etc*), go for it.

SPINNING AT HM NOW

BOB DYLAN	*Tell Tale Signs*	Outtakes from this master's recent work ('98-'06)
VARIOUS ARTISTS	*Billy: The Early Years*	I wish this collection had some more rock on it.
CAR STEREO WARS	*The Bandit*	A crazy mash-up collection by a former intern.
JON FOREMAN	*Limbs & Branches*	"Instead of a Show" steals it.
AMER. BLACK LUNG	*S/T*	Fun, fast, raw rawk.
COMEBACK KID	*Through The Noise*	Infectious, visual and energetic chant-along frenzy.
X-SINNER	*World Covered in Blood*	New AC/DC and this arrived during deadline. Wow!

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Letters to the Edit

FLIPPING OFF DISCIPLE

Hey I gotta say I was very excited/happy to learn Disciple was on the cover this issue. I had been hoping for that ever since I first discovered HM. The cover story you wrote was excellent. I was impressed by your parallel story with Brad Noah. A lot of people thought he had quit the band and this set the record straight. Thank you for that. btw, I know who Bob Hartman is. I met him when John Lowery was the keyboardist for Petra. Okay now, the review of their album was a big disappointment. I understand you didn't write it and, in fact, you gave the CD 4/5. I know you like to have odd people review things from time to time, Krystal Meyers for example. But that was kinda rude and left-handed to the band on the cover when your magazine review is so short and negative. "Redundant bar sludge" and "watered down sweet tea?" Would you invite Rob Bell over and tell him he was a wannabe Howard Stern? Maybe that's not a good analogy, but it's obvious the guy (Dan Frazier) didn't like the album, perhaps even the 'genre.' People like what they like, and his job was to state his opinion. I get that. I just think you could've found someone with a better affinity for the band and style of album. I talked this issue up on the web to my friends who like Disciple and they were as excited as I to see Disciple finally on the cover. Like me, most of them were less than impressed with the review. It's like you greeted them with one hand and flipped them off with the other. So what does that say about HM?
–James Shotwell X, via internet

Ed – I tried my best (and failed) to match the best reviewer with this album (like I do with every CD). Once I make the assignment – unless they clearly fail in their writing task – I run what my writer gives me. I can't tell my writers what to think. I was disappointed that he was so short and negative. Yanking the review once it was turned in, though, would have betrayed that editor/writer trust. What does this say about HM? I think it says we have independent writers. Dan MacIntosh wrote the cover story, by the way.

REVIEWING THE REVIEWER

I'd like to let the reviewer of Disciple's *Southern Hospitality* album (Dan Frazier) know that, as a longtime Disciple fan, I think that it's the best "redundant bar sludge" I've heard in my life!!!
–Jon Heider, via internet

Ed – I'm glad we could have this chat.

ALMOST OFFENDED

I was almost offended by M. Salomon, who put together the article on Copeland in the Nov/Dec Issue. The article reeks of sarcasm and obvious frustration with the band's management. Just because the writer is frustrated doesn't mean HM readers should get the short end of the stick. If I wanted to read someone's internet blog about how much they're fed up with Copeland, I'd search Blogspot or Wordpress. Most readers don't care about music industry politics and it should be the job of the journalist to present the artist and situation in a professional way. The first 10 paragraphs are so difficult to follow and the attempted joke about Republicans was unnecessary. Obviously, this author was ill-paired with the assignment.
–Jess Tack, Pennsylvania

Ed – I feel your pain. One thing you don't understand from our end, though, is that the band would not do an interview. We had to go ahead with a sans-interview style feature; and, since this one was entertaining, we went with it, knowing that it would come off like it did to many out there. I knowingly made the difficult choice to go forth with what you read, knowing that it had many of the characteristics that you pointed out. It was kinda gonzo and kinda crazy, which is fun to throw out there every once in a blue moon. While I don't expect you to agree with my decision necessarily, I am very appreciative that you shared your opinion.

ABOUT-TO-BE-A-TEENAGER

I'm a mother of a soon to be 13 year old son. He loves Christian rock/metal. I'm looking to find a devotional that he can relate to ... the author being someone that he already respects. Do you know of any devotionals by a Christian band member? Anxiously awaiting your reply. Thanks,
–Maria Franks, via internet

Ed – There are devotionals that I know of, but they are compilations that include a lot of the "lighter" ccm bands, as well as a few of the "harder" bands we cover. One is called Behind The Music and available on Faith Press [faithpressonline.com]

HM

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SCRIPTURE "Shout your praises to God, everybody! Let loose and sing! Strike up the band! Round up an orchestra to play for God. Add on a hundred-voice choir. Feature trumpets and big trombones. Fill the air with praises to King God." (Psalm 98:4-6, *The Message*)

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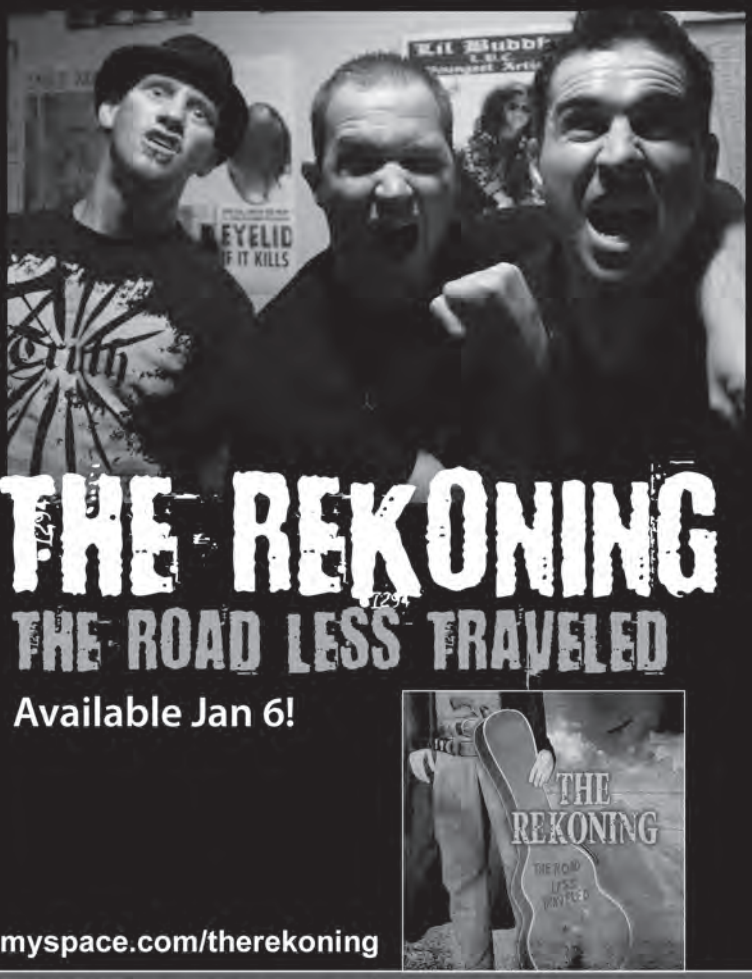

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JASON TRUBY FINDS QUIET
RELEASES THIRD SOLO ALBUM

Finding The Quiet is **Jason Truby**'s third solo instrumental album since stepping away as guitarist and songwriter for the multi-platinum band **P.O.D.** This will be an exclusive online release available only at iTunes and JasonTruby.com "*Finding The Quiet* is a collection of tunes I'd written over the past couple years for acoustic guitar that evolved through a personal process of decompression, a type of aid, as we attempt to turn off the volume of the world," Truby explains. "The acoustic guitar has warm timber and can sooth the mind and soul without a word being spoken. I enjoyed the simplicity of one guitar, one mic, and myself. The atmosphere really shines through when the music resonates as it was designed to do, without interference from over-production." He is continuing to work on his much-anticipated vocal album, slated to release early next year.

KENSRUE AND FOREMAN TEAM UP
BENEFIT SHOW FOR INVISIBLE CHILDREN

On December 19th, it's not about the music. Dustin Kensrue from Thrice, Jon Foreman (Switchfoot), Chris Conley (Saves the Day) and Jim Ward (Sleepercar, Sparta, At the Drive In) will perform a special acoustic concert to help raise awareness and support for Invisible Children, a non-profit organization that provides education and economic relief to war-torn Northern Uganda. Kensrue will be performing songs from his brand new holiday album, *This Good Night Is Still Everywhere* (released digitally 11/18 on Vagrant) and his debut solo release, *Please Come Home*. "Musicians have so much potential to inspire their audience and include them on issues happening around the world," says Kenny Laubbacher from Invisible Children, "it's amazing to see this group of individuals embrace that power and act on it for a positive influence."

Michael Wittig (Kalel) Leaves Pillar

"After 10 years it was just time for a change," relates one of Pillar's longest-standing members, Michael Wittig. "It was becoming more and more difficult to leave my family for long trips. I have two sons (Kaden 4 and Kyler 2), and they were having a hard time with my being gone. When I called home from a recent road trip and tried to talk to Kaden, I heard him say in the background, "No, I don't want to talk, I want the real thing." Lester (Estelle, the hard pounding drummer) stepping out of Pillar had a lot to do with my decision as well. He is one of my best friends, and I couldn't imagine continuing without him. I told myself years ago that if Lester left I would start praying about what to do. In my heart, I was feeling called to spend more time with my family, my management and consulting company (JMA Music), and my other band with Lester (Stars Go Dim). Ultimately I just knew it was time. I have a real peace about everything.
(Read more of this interview with Witting at hmmag.com)

News bullets

Thieves & Liars won the award for Best Hard Rock Band at the 18th Annual San Diego Music Awards.

Maylene & the Sons of Disaster had their new video, "The Day Hell Broke Loose At Sicard Hollow," directed by the folks at Hurley International.

Facedown Records has re-released **xDeathstarx**'s debut album, *The Triumph*. Originally released in 2004 on Life Sentence Records, *The Triumph* is now re-mixed, re-mastered and re-packaged with new artwork.

HM's contributing editor, **Kemper Crabb** has had his *Downe In Yon Forrest: Christmas From the Middle Ages* live DVD picked up by PBS for broadcast.

Headbanger's Ball is premiering the brand new **War Of Ages** video for "Through The Flames" on their website. War Of Ages recently finished up an incredible tour with Hatebreed, Emmure and Soilent Green and are planning for their first ever European tour this December on the annual *Persistence Tour*.

Switchfoot frontman **Jon Foreman** released *Limbs and Branches* in October. The full length, 12-song recording features two new tunes, "Broken From the Start" and "Over the River," as well as the most popular hits from his widely acclaimed *Fall*, *Winter*, *Spring* and *Summer* solo EP releases.

The Becoming have announced winter tour dates for December including shows with Mushroomhead and Saving Abel.

A Plea For Purging are in the midst of pre-production right now for the March 3rd release of *Depravity*, the sophomore release for the band on Facedown Records. The band will be entering Foundation Studios with Joey Sturgis (The Devil Wears Prada, Gwen Stacy, For the Fallen Dreams, At the Throne of Judgement) on Nov. 29th, through most of the month of December. There are two demo tracks that will appear on the record on APFP's myspace page.

Before Their Eyes

It's not too often that a band will get signed after its first show, but the gentlemen in Before Their Eyes, who were all in bands from around their Findlay, Ohio, area, recorded a few demos and then soon played a December 2006 show opening for The Devil Wears Prada in Toledo. They went off well, TDWP drummer put in a good word at the Rise Records label, they were signed by January 2007 and the rest, as they say, "is history."

What's the most awkward thing that's ever happened to you on tour?
Probably waking up with a guy named Pooti-Tang in the back of our van saying he's going to pull a gun on us.

How do you guys like using twitter.com? Are you using mobile devices to post your tweets? How long have you been using it? Likes and dislikes of the new social network...?
Twitter is rad – it's a good way for fans to know what we're up to. The only dislike that I have is not remembering to update it as often as I should.

Who are some bands (or a band) that is going to surprise everyone with their greatness? Share with us an under-rated and/or under-appreciated hard music band out there.
There is an amazing acoustic female fronted project called See You Soon that is amazing. Also a band from Ohio called Let's Get It. Watch out for both of them.

Tell us about the recording experience working on *The Dawn of My Death*. How hard was it in the songwriting/composition process? How was working with the producer? Any stories or experiences you'll take away from this album and probably never forget?
The recording experience was awesome. We wrote pretty much the entire album in the studio. We've only worked with Joey Sturgis on everything we've done – we click with him perfectly. I think the whole writing process we'll never forget because it was stressful but it all came together perfect.

What lyrics, messages or themes are important to you from this album? What songs stand out to you, and why?
I think the theme for a lot of the songs is hitting rock bottom, but know(ing) that God is always there to pick you back up. I think that is pretty important. I think the best songs on the album are: "Life Was All A Dream," "Because 7 Ate 9," and "The Me I Used To Be."

What is a lesson (or lessons) that God has been trying to teach you guys lately?
That we need to be Christ followers – not just use the Christian label (anyone can do that). Actions speak louder than words.

Anything else you'd like to add?
Go buy our album now.

From the abyss of the **Impending Doom** camp comes news of their brand new album, *The Serpent Servant*. This sophomore release will be available on March 31st through Facedown Records. The band is currently writing and will be recording with **Tim Lambesis** and Daniel Castleman (As I Lay Dying, War Of Ages, Winds Of Plague) at Lambesis Studios in San Diego. The album will then be mixed and mastered by Zeuss (Hatebreed, Shadows Fall, Terror). Impending Doom will be announcing some big tour plans in early '09. They will also be one of the headliners at the 10th annual Facedown Fest in Pomona, CA.

Speaking of bands recording with Lambesis: **Zao** has been doing just that. "We simply can not wait for everyone to hear these new songs," says longtime guitarist **Scott Mellinger**. "We have not been on the road since the **Demon Hunter** and Throwdown tours in 2006, which has given us plenty of time to get our wits about us and to really concentrate on creating the best batch of material we possibly can." Tim Lambesis, who is co-producing their new album, explains that, "Zao is a band that has influenced all types of bands in the heavy music genre, from the Deftones and to my band. I'm very excited be a part of bringing them the production their band has always deserved. This record will be the Zao sound that fans and musicians like myself have been waiting to hear for a long time." The lineup for this ZAO album is the same as *The Fear...*: Longtime co-conspirators **Weyandt** and Mellinger alongside bass player **Martin Lunn** and drummer **Jeff Gretz** (From Autumn to Ashes). "Recording Jeff Gretz's drums was the most relaxing and professional studio experience I've ever been a part of," boasts Lambesis. "That guy is a true pro and the standard by which I will judge every other drummer I record at Lambesis Studios in the future." Zao's new album will be released in 2009.

Haste The Day have just wrapped up a national tour with Norma Jean and are gearing up for a headlining run in December with Sky Eats Airplane, **Emarosa**, and **Inhale/Exhale**, covering the Midwest and Southeast.

HARDNEWS
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Ruth

BY LEVI MACALLISTER

"Honestly, dude, I could be working at Taco Bell if God wanted me there. "

Dustin Ruth's kind humility is more apparent than he probably knows. You don't speak about the wonder of God in the way this man does unless the intimacy is there and transparent. "For some reason God allowed me to be able to – somewhat – play the guitar and sing. I definitely want you to know, first and foremost, that this is a blessing."

"I don't know if people get passionate about math or other things, but I know that music is something that really moves people in every way: emotionally, spiritually and mentally." Lord knows that math shouldn't move anyone, so thank God for passionate musicianship. The guy even makes singing about I-5 look good. "I distinctly remember feeling this way on a family vacation ... I'd be lookin' out the windows at a sweet desert scene on my way to California, and I'd just feel like getting out of the car and running if a certain song came on, thinking, 'Gosh! I love music!'"

The dude's an anorak, and anoraks are weirdoes. They talk about unexplainable things, and they talk about them a lot. But that's cool – consensus of Trekkies 1 and 2, which inspired the album title. At least, that's how Ruth felt after removing a song from their last record which questioned the love of others "if only [they] knew the things I do…" because it might've come across as "too honest" for the Christian market.

"It feels like people don't want to hear the depth or honesty of what people think about God, or faith in Jesus, and forgiveness. They just want to hear the 'goods.' We want to know God deeper and deeper, and we love talking about it."

After paying out of pocket to prove to the label that their desire to collaborate with Surrogate's Chris Keene for the majority of *Anorak* succeeded, Ruth found the freedom to craft that honesty into an album that fills in the spots where the previous was found wanting.

"It gives me joy. I just think God had a special hand on this project. Sometimes I play the guitar and I'm like, 'How can I put four fingers down and play a chord? Gosh, this is only God.' When I listen to these songs it helps me understand God better."

News bullets

Becoming The Archetype's new album, *Dichotomy*, features one of the most defining figures of technical metal, Devin Townsend (Lamb Of God, Bleeding Through) in the producer's chair as well as making a guest appearance. Also guesting is **Ryan Clark**. Marrying the Southern groove of swamp metal, keyboard flourishes from European metal, elements of Swedish death metal and progressive music, the band put their own stamp on the American metal scene. The concept of the album draws a great deal of inspiration from C.S. Lewis's works, including *That Hideous Strength*, *The Great Divorce* and *The Chronicles Of Narnia*. **Jason Wisdom** (lead vocals / bass) comments that, "Lewis was a Christian writer who earned the respect of every reader and that's what I wanted to do – to make a record that isn't just the alternative to some secular metal band for Christians. We want to be the best metal band that's out there, period."

Ferret Music's **Gwen Stacy** has announced two new tours to kick off 2009 with a bang. They will start by spending three weeks out on the road with Our Last Night, Vanna, and **In Fear and Faith**. They will take the rest of February to gear up for their month-long trek through Europe with labelmates Poison the Well and 36 Crazyfists. This will be the band's first European tour and they're greatly looking forward to playing to new crowds and making new fans. They've been on the road constantly in support of their record *The Life I Know*. Since its release the record has sold over 11,000 copies. With new members in the fold, the band has already started writing their sophomore record.

According to the band's MySpace page, the new **Stavesacre** EP, *Against The Silence*, is complete. "We are extremely happy with the way it turned out. **Jason Martin** and **Steve Dail** did an amazing job.

Capital Lights had its music video for the song "Outrage" debut on Purevolume.com. The band penned the original track "His Favorite Christmas Story" for the album *X Christmas*.

Wrench In The Works

What are some practical tips on playing such fast music in a tight fashion?
Drummer Andy Nelson: Playing fast and tight is something I am constantly working to get better at, especially trying to pull it off live every night. The initial reaction is to tense your body up when trying to play fast; when, really, you have to be completely relaxed with your muscles very limber and you should be thinking slow. It's the same idea when playing a slow tempo – you should be thinking fast and with faster tempos be thinking slow. Always remember to breathe or your brain will not be getting oxygen, making it harder to concentrate. Also take a faster tempo part of one of your songs and just practice that individual part, but at a slow tempo and play it for long periods of time. This will increase your speed and make you more proficient at the part.

What are some of the musical highlights that have excited you lately (whether that's your music, your shows, other artists' music, etc)?
The guttural feeling I get when I listen to musical acts like mewithoutYou, The Glorious Unseen and Psalters have been a pretty big influence. Getting to play the BBQ Fest in Georgia with The Chariot and A Plea For Purging and hearing both bands' new jams was very exciting. Getting to tour with Life In Your Way was a huge encouragement – on and off stage they live their message and the Holy Spirit reigns through that band.

Let's talk about "heaping coals..." What are some practical implications of that Bible verse? How does one live that out? Comment on your opinions regarding how you see this sort of thing being lived out around you.
When someone treats you in a negative manner, an initial reaction is to return that negativity back to them; but if you can instead show them the love of Christ, you can help make waves of love and heap coals of the Holy Spirit. We try to heap coals through this band, which we consider a ministry, by showing and telling people about the love of God and that, even though we're not perfect, we do have redemption through Christ. I feel we live in such negative and desperate times that it's easy to fall into that pattern, but we have to strive to show hope and love, thus keeping the coals burning. It also starts with a decreasing of ourselves and allowing God to be our eyes and direct our paths, because we would just fail if we tried to do it without Him. We just want to be open vessels of His work. We might not always see the fruits of our works, but we know God will continue to work in the places we have been.

What are some priorities that your band could not live or exist without? What are some things that, if they were not present, would end the band as we know it? Why?
Individually and as a group our relationship with Jesus is definitely the glue that keeps this band together. The word of God, aka the Bible and prayer, helps us to let God's will be done. It's easy to get your own agenda with your band, but I can tell you from experience that you have to let God take from and put in what He knows you need. And, of course, we couldn't get too far without our van, equipment and electricity.

If you had an encouraging word, a rebuke, or something important to communicate to our scene (as broad or narrow as you conceive it to be), what would you like to say?
We really feel God wants to work miracles in the underground scene. It's a great place to form friendships and an outlet for youth, but musically it's suffering in originality and sincerity and it seems to be only getting worse. Kids are just settling for the same watered-down formula, which seems to sell today. When we first got into the scene 15 years ago kids were more open and willing to listen to new and creative music and ideas.

Please check out our record, *Lost Art of Heaping Coal,* and check out other bands on Facedown Records. As a whole we need your support and love.

Strike First Records signed Southern California's **Earth From Above**. They will be recording their debut full- length in January with engineer Chris Eck (Impending Doom, Mirrors of Dead Faces, Oblige) for a spring 09 release.

Relient K will hit the road with **tobyMac** on November 13th for the *Winter Wonder-Slam Tour*.

Randy Miller, the drummer for **The Myriad**, had a tumor removed from his upper torso recently. It appears that the tumor is cancerous, which will mean a lot of medical bills in the near future. Like many musicians, Randy doesn't have medical insurance. So he, as well as his wife and children, could use our support. For more info, go to thestirring.org

The Twilight Original Motion Picture Soundtrack features a couple new songs by **Paramore** ("Decode," which has a video, and "I Caught Myself"), as well as tunes by **Mute Math**, Muse, Linkin Park, and **Collective Soul**. And, speaking of Paramore... **Hayley Williams** is one of the main stars on *Guitar Hero: World Tour* (along with Sting, Ted Nugent, Jimi Hendrix, Billy Corgan and a bunch of others). Her character comes out and sings when you play "Misery Business" on career mode. Paramore's CD/DVD, *The Final Riot!*, documents live renditions of hits such as "Misery Business" and "That's What You Get," alongside *40 Days of RIOT!*, an exclusive documentary feature from director Brandon Chesbro.

The Almost's *No Gift To Bring* EP was produced by **Tim McTague**, guitarist for **Aaron Gillespie**'s other band, **Underoath**. It was McTague's idea to re-imagine *Southern Weather*'s country-leaning "Dirty And Left Out," imbuing this raw reflection on the baffling nature of unconditional love with a sparse, electronic vibe. "Tim did all the sequencing on the song, then had me sing over it," says Gillespie. "We wanted to strip it way down – it's a complete and utter departure." Gillespie, who's currently touring with Underoath, has already begun writing songs for The Almost's next full-length album. The band will begin recording next spring.

HARDNEWS
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Enough Already!

BY JAMIE LEE RAKE

Christafari's **AVION BLACKMAN** deserves better than the fate of having her sophomore solo outing, *Sweet Life* (Lion of Zion), fall into the Christian reggae pigeonhole. Even without hubby/C-fari leader Mark Mohr and Imisi's David Fohe guesting, it would be plenty and wonderfully reggaefied. But, she also refreshingly refashions '80s-'90s Britsoul ala' Soul II Soul and Sade with her breathy, supple voice. With the right single choices and marketing behind her, Blackman could be a crossover queenpin, encompassing cCm, soul gospel, adult r&b and dance/club. And reggae.

You may have thought of **JOHNNY CASH** and electronica as mutually exclusive entities up to now, and who'd blame you? Be prepared to think of the Man In Black in a wholly different, synthesized light upon hearing *Johnny Cash Remixed* (Compadre). Prepare, too, to hear most of the subject's Tennessee Two tunes used here work within its hip-hop, bigbeat, glitch, dub, etc. bounds. Only when the remixers or their guests insinuate themselves among Cash's vocals do things get dicey, save for Snoop Dogg's assist. Yay for the bit of gospel in the mix, too.

Dancey electronics and too often anonymous vocalists praise the Lord on the praise-centric work of the collective known as **DREAMLAB** (Go Global). Their four releases thus far rely heavily on sleek, dreamy trance grooves and downtempo chillness, but Technodelic could lure some rock aficionados with its wah-wah and other psychedelic trademarks that somehow likewise recall late '80s Madchester indie-dance, too (oh, it has credited vocals, too). Here's looking forward to the 'Lab's forthcoming stab at straight-up gospel-house.

I might like the DreamLab material better than he does, but **CAREY JARVIS** plays hecka' fine tuneage on *Dance Chapel*, his weekly three-hour plunge into the wilds of sanctified dance music. He, too, loves trance, but he's feeling drum&bass, techno and other subgenres for a well-rounded, non-beatmixed show. Hear him Friday nights 7-10 Central on WOCR from Michigan's Olivet college. And I wouldn't be mentioning it if you couldn't hear it online (WOCRFM.com).

Where jazz, folk, blues and rock experimentation meet, probably among other places, is in Michigander **ED ENGLERTH**'s surreal, but Scripturally grounded, songwriting. On *Restless Ghost*, Jesus movement survivor Englerth teams up with former Frank Zappa sideman Ray White for a slice of wry worldweariness possessed of inventive arrangements and sneaky hooks. Were Jandek to come to Christ and become more musically competent, Englerth's current thang could be an approximation of that scenario. Good thing, that, by the way.

More music! More variety! Make that a reality by sending me the aforementioned by godly people in styles the rest of this mag' doesn't cover to P.O. Box 29;Waupun, WI 53963 U.S.A.

Until next time, tell your sister I say hi, OK?

News bullets

Anberlin is going on a 2-week trip with Faceless International in December into Nellore, India, where they will be working with victims and the prevention of human trafficking.

A Kiss for Jersey is currently working on new material and have plans for a new music video shortly.

Decyfer Down have recently announced the addition of a new lead singer, **TJ Harris**. Formerly with the band **Fighting Instinct**, Harris has joined the band effective immediately. "TJ brings a unique vocal edge to the band with his dynamic style, and is an exciting and engaging live performer," remarks drummer **Josh Oliver**. "Combined with his heart for ministry, Decyfer Down is looking forward to starting this new chapter in the band's career." Addressing the changes," **Caleb** (former lead singer) is dealing with some personal things," continued Oliver. "We had hoped they could be dealt with in the context of the band, but it has become apparent that he needs to step away to find resolve. He is my brother, I love him, and we as a band support him and still consider him a brother as well. Moving forward with Decyfer Down, we are excited to have TJ as our new lead singer – the shows we've done together have been great." Their upcoming sophomore record, aptly titled *Crash*, is due in April.

Josh Dies (singer/songwriter of the band **Showbread**) will be doing a national tour this January in support of the re-release of *The Spinal Cord Perception*, as well as the release of his new children's book, *The Insect,* and his forthcoming sophomore novel *Nevada,* that will be released later in 2009. The event will have a very open atmosphere with Josh reading from his books, answering questions and having an open conversation with the audience, as well as doing an acoustic set mostly made up of requests from the Showbread catalog, his solo project **Dies**, with a few surprises thrown in.

Allan Aguirre has started recording with his new music group, **Men As Trees Walking**.

LIVE REPORT

Austin City Limits Music Festival 2008

September 26 - 28

BY LAUREL ERICKSON, LEVI MACALLISTER, DOUG VAN PELT

AUSTIN, TX – This was the seventh annual collection of 130 or so bands on 8 stages with 65,000 laid-back and friendly fans taking it all in each day for three days. Like most fests in our time, there's too much for any one person to take in, so we had three brave souls covering the fest for HM Magazine. Here's a glimpse of what we saw and heard. *(see more at hmmag.com)*

Dan Dyer was starting the afternoon off with very soulful vocals. His voice was so beautiful and he made what he did look so easy. For the majority of the set he was jammin away on the keys backed by a bass that was carved at the top of the neck to look like a string bass or cello. Gorgeous. The backup vocals were thrown in by the drummer. Together this 3-piece band flowed sweet rhythms, funky soul, and a lot of sweat. (It was getting hot out...).

I think no amount of excitement the whole day may have matched the beats my heart skipped when my hero, **Robert Plant** of Led Zeppelin, and **Alison Krauss** stepped onto the stage for their Saturday night conclusion to day two of ACL. The only thing that could've made it better … well, it happened. They covered Zeppelin's "Black Dog" to an incredibly slow-paced, beautiful bluegrass rendition. I was surprised by how classy the whole band was. Violin, stand-up bass, keys, bluesy drum-rock. Suits. Ties. Guitar – and not just any guitar … **T Bone Burnett**-in-the-flesh guitar. T Bone directed the band (as well as the songs on this pair's album) like a Gospel/roots rock maestro. Alison Krauss might have one of the most breathy, seductive voices I've ever heard, and Plant's harmony … it's like … it's like heaven in your ears. It's like you just ate the first steaming-hot, honey-dipped sopapilla of your life and now you can't get enough and you've become a bottomless pit for the sweet melody, and you lose yourself and forget you're standing on solid earth. The only reason you remember you're not flying forty minutes through the set are the annoying group of girls behind you discussing the problems with the chick flick they saw before the festival.

I could hear **Flyleaf** from a mile away. Literally. No, I mean – literally. The closest drop off point we could find for the last day was at an IHOP next to the onramp for I-35 a mile or two from the park. We were totally running late, but in a way that made the opening even more powerful. There wasn't a huge "Christian" population of artists at ACL – at least not this year – so when Haley's haunting voice echoed across the distance with the opener of "I Love You, Lord" that could be heard from our trek-start point, it was like a spirit-lifter from the onset, and I itched to get there as fast as I could. Can I just say this? Can I just say this, freely? Lacey Mosley is gorgeous. Gorgeous. Her voice is powerful. Her band was able to release energy that not many others expressed due to the hot Texas sun, and the whole experience made for a great concert. And they wear their convictions out on their sleeves. Numerous times, Lacey dedicated songs to the Lord, particularly "All Around Me," which she noted is about Jesus' presence and love. The song "Cassie" was explained. "Sorrow," "I'm Sorry" and "Red Sam" adorned the set as well. By far, the most powerful song was the clincher, "There For You." Lacey dedicated the song to a woman who had the words sung to her by her husband the last time they spoke before he was killed in Iraq. She mixed the lyrics "I'm falling on my knees, offering all of me … Jesus, You're all this heart's worth living for" into the last verse. It was an emotional experience. One I hadn't expected, honestly.

Mike Farris, who had **The Roseland Rhythm Revue** with him, almost brought down the giant WalMu room/tent they were playing in. He practically wouldn't let anyone on stage or in the room sit still, as he constantly led them in clappin' and dancin' as the joy spread.

Clockwise from top: Mike Farris and The Roseland Rhythm Revue; Alison Krauss and Robert Plant; T Bone Burnett directing musical traffic; Flyleaf's rambunctious Pat Seals returning to the stage after a jaunt into the crowd; Flyleaf's Lacey Mosley. [Photos by Doug Van Pelt]

Classic Moments in Christian Rock history

BY DOUG VAN PELT

DELIVERANCE

Weapons Of Our Warfare

[1990 | Intense]

Speed metal comes of age.

Back in the day Christian metal was just starting to bridge the gap between "as good as those secular bands" being a hopeful boast and a statement of truth. While showing the talent, tone and attitude to tackle the musically-challenging genre of speed metal (which took a tighter approach to thrash metal that preferred precision and quickness over tough breakdowns), Deliverance wowed the Christian metal world with its second album, *Weapons of our Warfare*. Coupled with some killer artwork that tipped its artistic pen to the Kansas *Leftoverture* album cover, Jimmy Brown and Company took the thrilling theology of Frank Peretti and turned it to 11. "Supplication" served as a metal spoken intro that featured some beautifully-strummed acoustic guitar notes that built up into a screaming crescendo of Brown and Ochoa's dual guitars climbing a shrill melodic scale that made Christian metalheads everywhere salivate. "This Present Darkness" then surged ahead with blasting drums and set the tone for the album. The title track featured a video that got some significant airplay on MTV's *Headbanger's Ball*. This song certainly showcased all of the band's strengths – that massive metal guitar tone, a tight-as-a-tick rhythm section, tough-guy vocals that could raise through the ceiling with a high-pitched wail that rivaled a guitarist's bottom fret, bent low-E string attempt. The band would go on to re-define themselves with its *Stay Of Execution* album, but this one remains its most historic moment as a band.

Mortal

Fathom

[1993 | Intense]

Unquestioned greatness.

This two-man outfit gelled as a creative force with this, their second album on the Frontline Music Group distributed label, Intense Records. While mostly known as a heavy metal label at the time, this Terry Taylor produced bunch introduced a refined industrial sound to the aggressive musical landscape that was ever changing in the early nineties. *Lusis* introduced Mortal's sound and their skill at weaving genres like metal, pop, techno and even punk vocal aggro into something palatable, melodic, and memorable. *Fathom* took it up another notch, coming to the plate with a better batch of songs. It begins with an XDR test tone sample that was often used on cassette tapes at the time. Then it launches into the first of many energetic tunes, like "Alive And Awake," which were not only hypnotic and mesmerizing at times, but had a chorus that begged a sing-along. It was helped with a good amount of tension between the lines of "I'm alive..." and the long pause before the delivery of "and A-WAKE!!!" came pounding in for the resolution. "Rift" was slow and haunting, which included a daring concept video about child abuse. "Godspeed" finishes this album that everyone should own with the kind of frenetic intensity that could bridge the gap between techno dancers and air guitar welding metalheads.

Look here for a couple classic, genre-changing albums highlighted each issue until we celebrate our 25th Anniversary in July, 2010; where we'll unveil a top-100 list of Christian rock's greatest albums of all time. Let the fighting begin [go to the message boards at ***hmmag.com***]

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CONFIDE

BY BRIAN WASHBURN

Relocating to the U.S. from overseas can always be seen as a risky move for a band who is just starting out. But moving across the Atlantic Ocean to join a band he had never met before probably seemed absurd for Confide vocalist Ross Kenyon.

"I came [to California] on vacation and met a girl. We kept in contact and I would come back to visit her and we started dating," Kenyon said in a phone interview. "Through her I met Confide. They were looking for a singer. I was in a band back in England, but the band I was in were not Christian and it was hard to work with them because we didn't see eye to eye on a lot of things."

Since Kenyon's move to LA, it's hard to deny that Confide – Kenyon, guitarists Jeff Helberg and Aaron Van Zupten, bassist Billy Pruden and drummer Arin Ilejay – are seeing eye to eye, at least when it comes to what they have accomplished already. The Christian metalcore act were signed to Warner Brothers offspring label Science Records on their first show with Kenyon at the helm, played *Warped Tour*, opened a national tour for Maylene and the Sons of Disaster and recorded a debut full-length at LA's Hurley Studios.

"We have been a band for four years, which is a pretty long time to be together before putting out a debut record. We had been doing it a while, so I just feel we wrote a mature record," Helberg said. "[The album] is similar to what a lot of bands are doing, but every band does have their own sound... We put all of our elements into a pot, stirred it around and saw what came out." What came out was *Shout The Truth*, Confide's debut to be released in stores early next year, although it is already available online. Although musically the album can be compared to scene statutes Underoath and As Cities Burn, Helberg says they throw in some unusual influences into the mix, such as John Mayer and Jazz. However, lyrically Kenyon focuses on a positive, Christian message through his grueling screams and top-of-his-lungs shouting. "Our Christianity does come through lyrically. We're real people who get up on stage and tell people we're not just there to play music, we're there to hang out and love them. [Being in this band] is not just about saying you're a Christian, but living a lifestyle that respects God, trying to be there for the fans, love on them, be positive around them and shine God's love on them. Instead of just saying we are just a Christian band, we want to show it through our actions."

Kenyon's actions onstage through his screaming/shouting vocals might be another aspect to set Confide apart from fellow bands in the music scene, which he says is a result of, "hearing anyone else in the music scene do that and [his] trying to sing, so it just came out as a talky-shout." But these vocals are what led Confide to Kenyon in the first place.

"Ross' vocals are unique. He does what no one has seen before and that was one of the main reasons we picked him [to do vocals] than the other 100 people who auditioned," Helberg said. Kenyon's vocals, plus the music, inspiration and drive are leading Confide to new heights this year, with their CD release, tour dates with Blessthefall and Bring Me The Horizon, and a growing fan base. However, the band seems to always have their eyes set on what they originally set out to accomplish.

"We want to reach as many kids as possible, share the love of Jesus with as many kids as possible, get our CD into the hands of as many people as possible, play as many shows as possible and spread the love to as many people as possible."

myspace.com/confide

Help Wanted: Vocalist

Lada Krizek and Kreyson played for soldiers in Kosovo

At the invitation of first lieutenant, Fr. Kamil Vícha, chaplain of the 13th contingent of the Army of the Czech Republic who works in a mission focused on protection of public order and safety of inhabitants of the youngest European state of Kosovo, Láda Krížek and Kreyson performed in Kosovo. The group spent three memorable days at the base. We are bringing you a topical reportage right from the military base in Šajkovec:

The concert at the military base had a fantastic atmosphere. I must say that from the first tone everything was absolutely perfect. Sound, lights, the group and the atmosphere under the stage. Láda communicated with the soldiers who were absolutely amazed and it was apparent that they were real soldiers. Their voices sounded as if they were taking an oath – clearly and loudly. Reddy with Láda played several pieces by request. Together with Father Kamil Vícha, he dedicated a piece called "Scházíš mi" (I miss you) to all the soldiers who will never come back home from their missions. It was a really strong emotive experience and had a great applause from everybody.

After that Láda Krížek said, "I think it is wonderful when a person smiles. But things cease to be fun when one's life ends. And I hope that this song will be heard so far that everybody will hear us – and Father Kamil will take care of that because he has received that gift from God – may all those who have not returned home hear us. And not only from here, from the war zones of the countries of former Yugoslavia but also from Afghanistan, Iraq and from all the places where there is even a bigger "draught" than here. And I think that those "above" should be, and actually are happy when we thank them from this place for everything they did for the planet – for well-being with a smile." And then the song "Scházíš mi" followed.

Then there was a turn for big beat again. All the arms were up and the atmosphere at the base was stirring. The concert was slowly approaching its end. The boys finished but the soldiers wanted more and so they called the group back by chanting the words "HEAVY METAL". Zdenál ran to the stage and performed a breathtaking solo. Amazing, quick and perfect. If I say that I could not see the drumsticks at one moment due to the speed with which they were moving, I'm not exaggerating.

After the first bonus song the boys were applauded on the open scene and the audience called them back to the stage for the second time by chanting "KREYSON, KREYSON, KREYSON…". Láda said that due to the distance which these soldiers need to travel to get home, he will be very happy to add more songs. The boys bowed down, said good-bye and were accompanied with big endless chanting and applause as this unforgettable performance approached its end. After the concert the group gave autographs and there was a picture-taking.

—Jan Petrik

Father Kamal Vicha

Atmosphere at the concert

Kreyson at the military base

Kreyson at the military base

Before the concert

Kreyson says goodbye before flying back home

Further information from the concert, including photographs, you can find at the official website of the Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic - http://www.army.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=12299. ("Kreyson Won Hearts of Soldiers in Kosovo")

Address of the mission: http://www.13kfor.army.cz/

(The main aim of MNTF(C) is to ensure and maintain safe environment primarily in the area of responsibility (AOR). In case of need and based on decisions of the operation commander the MNTF(C) units can fulfill and do fulfill operation tasks in the whole area of Kosovo. KFOR units can be employed also outside Kosovo in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, possibly also in the former Yugoslavian republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

Father Kamil Vícha is a long-standing friend of Kreyson and this year he has attended their concerts not only in the Czech Republic but he also went with the group and its fans to a festival in Switzerland where Kreyson experienced a big success. He is also a regular participant in a festival called Noc plná hvezd (Night Full of Stars) in Trinec, where he is along with the Maltese Help of the Czech great priory of the Sovereign Order of Maltese Knights responsible for spiritual services.

AUBURN

BY DOUG VAN PELT

So, imagine that you are named Vinnie. You're driving through Massachusetts and you pass an exit on the freeway for Auburn, MA. You think to yourself, 'Now, *that* would be a good name for a band!' But, you are in another band at the time, so you file it away. Then, much later, you end up jamming with these other guys, you throw out the name, another guy remembers living in a Washington town called Auburn, so you take it as a sign and christen your new band with it.

This heavy outfit actually started as a pop/punk entity, but found themselves listening to and enjoying more metal and hardcore, so they evolved and added members to what they have today. "We recorded a pre-production of our single, 'Like Trying to Kiss a Freight Train,'" which shortly after caught the attention of Blue Duck Records. Besides getting signed fairly early, Auburn has also been able to share the stage with two of its biggest influences: Every Time I Die and Maylene and the Sons of Disaster.

"The kids here in our area are supportive and everything, but nothing beats being on tour!" Once their debut EP, *Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth*, comes out in January, they plan on staying on the road for a good long time. And it won't be too long before they record a full-length to follow. "We've actually already started writing for our debut full length! We're wicked excited to even get back into the studio, even though we just got out!" Laughter abounds. But then they're hit with the ultimate question:

If you could create either the perfectly heavy riff that would blow away your male audience or the most excellent melody that would get every girl in the audience to sing-along, (and you could only pick one of the two), which would you choose? And why?

"Oooo ... that is a tough question! But as much as we all love those heavy riffs that get us up and moving, I would have to go with the melody. Nothing feels better than looking out from the stage and seeing kids who know the part to a song that you poured so much emotion into."

So much for being poster boys for tough guy rock...

Take us through point A to point Z on a song that you have written.

"Well I'll tell you … but it's gonna be hard to make it sound interesting! Usually John and Vinnie bring a few guitar licks and riffs into the practice space that they've been 'tinkering' with over the time we've been apart. We then sort through it and throw out the garbage! Once we get a part down, we all play it together to see where our 'imaginations' lead us for the next part – be it a transition, chorus, breakdown, etc. Then, repeat the last step till you got all the music down! Then something magical happens! The music is actually a huge part in what the lyrics are going to be about! It's like there is a way the music feels that makes Brian write about a certain thing! We also get a lot of help from friends whose opinions we trust."

If your band could be remembered for one thing, what would it be (and why)?

"Auburn could probably be remembered by its 'character.' We've been through so much together: a burning van, loads of personal problems and things of the sort. After everything that happens, we come out so much stronger. Also the fact that we're family! And we feel the fans are a huge part of our family- we are here for them! We want everyone to know that they're not alone, everyone has a purpose, and *everything* happens for a reason!

myspace.com/auburnmass

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NEW SCHOOL RECORDS!

MY EPIC

BY DAVID STAGG

There's a definitive trust that emanates from My Epic; you trust someone who commits wholeheartedly to something and My Epic's Jesse Stone has me convinced the band is doing God's work. Jesse conveys this to me when he's telling me about their ideas for touring now that their debut full-length release, *I Am Undone*, is out; I start to realize as he's talking that a lot of their future plans for the band, they aren't necessarily fiscally sound at all. You start to realize this band honestly doesn't care about the money. They care about people.

When I talk to Jesse, he's volunteering at a local bike shop that's partnered with a non-profit. He's actually a courier for an uptown Charlotte sandwich shop, earning some extra money where he and the band (his brother Aaron Stone and Jeremiah Austin) call home. The last U.S. tour they were on, their van broke down and they had to go out and get a new one, but when they did, the transmission fell out of that one. "We spent all our money to buy a new vehicle, then spent the money we didn't have to fix the new one," Jesse tells me.

Jesse comes quickly with his next statement: "It sucks that it has to come down to money."

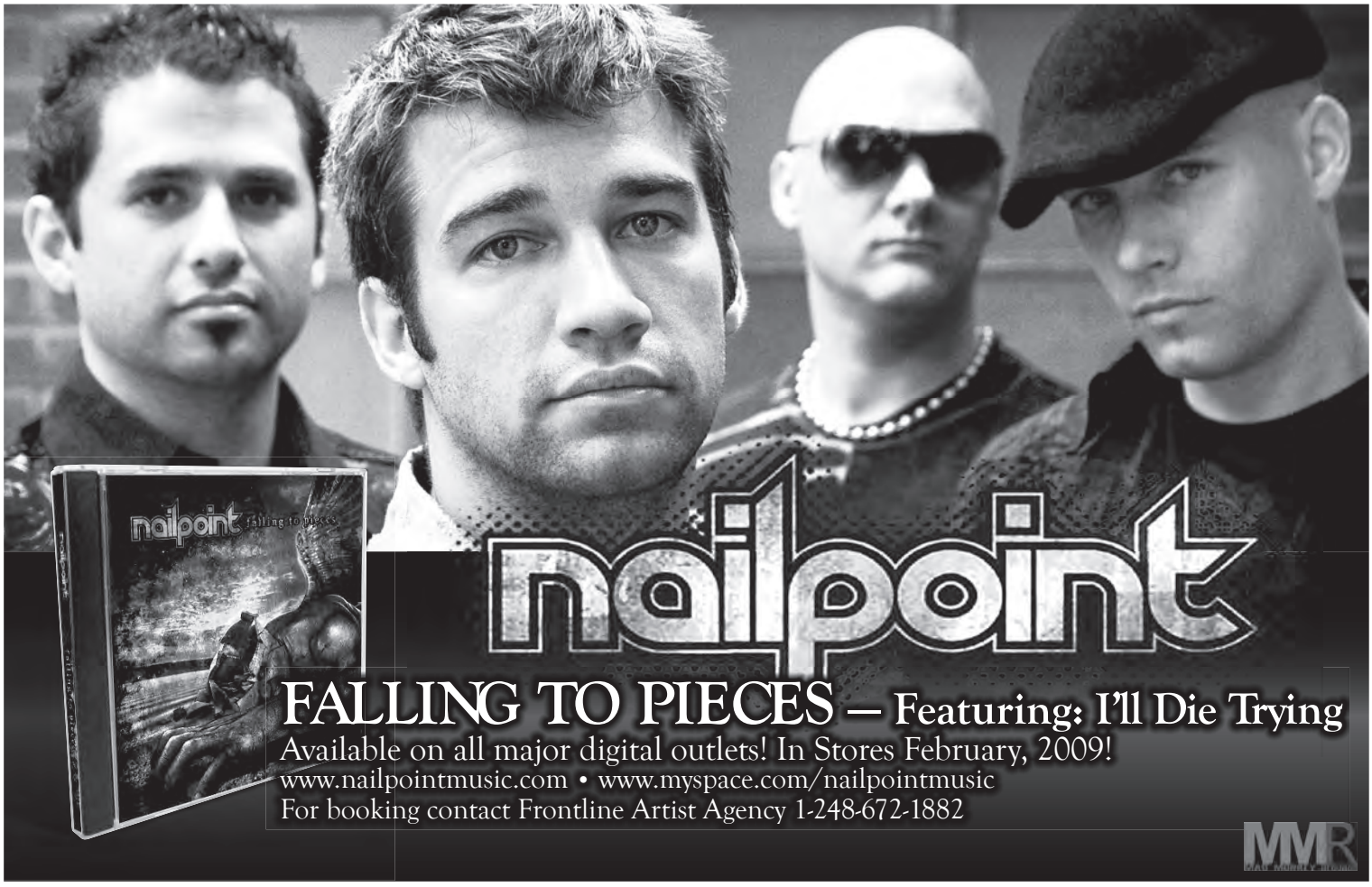
It's a phrase that defines the band. Through my conversation with Jesse about My Epic, he's one of the most genuine people I've talked to in awhile. Jesse's heart just pours over in his speech. At the end of our conversation, he tells me he's not usually the one who does interviews and that I should call the other guys. It's like at the end of our conversation he wants to go back and check on what he said; the passion just had him talking.

My Epic recently released *I Am Undone*, and it seems like the record is just an excuse to go on tour to meet and fellowship with people around the country. While music is their passion, it's almost like the record is their evangelical excuse to meet fans, pray with them, be with them. Jesse even started talking about, for their next tour, to do three or four night stops in cities, spending time with the people they meet, leading them in prayer and fellowship. "We are thinking about spending a long time in a place when we go there, meeting the people's needs there," he says. "We could spend three nights there, one night probably play a show, the other nights meet together and pray. Whatever is needed there."

It's not the most fiscally sound plan, but that's where the trust comes in. They absolutely have to rely on God to provide. Whether it be the money to fix their car, a place to stay that night, or even a meal, Jesse and the band are ready to put it on the line. "We don't even know how it's going to work," Jesse says. "As it sits now, we wouldn't have enough music to play. I don't know, we just want to spend some time encouraging the believers, getting in depth with some of the kids there. To have that extra day or two, to encourage, and pour over them, there's a lot of potential there. Fleshing it out and making it work, we don't know." But listening to him speak, you're almost ready to sponsor them right then and there.

myspace.com/myepic

an excuse to fellowship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HM BACK ISSUES: READ 'EM WHILE YOU CAN

#114
20th Anniv Issue S.E.

Payable On Death
Disciple
MxPx
Every Time I Die Says
TFK
Robert Randolph
Damien Jurado
Headphones
History of C.Rock
History of C.Metal
History of HM mag

#134
Disciple & BTA

Haste The Day
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Everclear Says
Trenches
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FF5 poster
Austrian Death Mach.
Grave Robber
Cool Hand Luke
Jonezetta
Copeland

#133
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Special "flip" double cover
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#131
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Soul Embraced
Kittie Says
Ivoryline
Larry Norman poster
Kevin Max
Run Kid Run
w/Blood Comes...

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PARTIAL LIST OF AVAILABLE BACK ISSUES:

#088 Mar/Apr '01 **Zao**, Luti-Kriss, **The Brothers Martin** (yes!), The Alarm, FSF
#091 Sep/Oct '01 **P.O.D.**, **Dashboard Confessional**, DA, One 21, Embodyment
#098 Nov/Dec '02 **Blindside**, Dream Theater Says, **Embodyment**, Lost Dogs
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#110 Nov/Dec '04 So&SoSays Special, In Flames, **Lamb of God**, Throwdown, **Slipknot**
#111 Jan/Feb '05 **Comeback Kid**, Showbread, Anberlin, **Taking Back Sunday Says**
#112 Mar/Apr '05 **Norma Jean**, Extol, Starflyer 59, **Eisley**, Far-Less, Scorpions Says
#115 Sep/Oct '05 **Blindside**, Mortal Treason, John Davis, **Project 86**, The Locust Says
#116 Nov/Dec '05 **No Innocent Victim**, Demon Hunter, **My Chemical Romance Says**
#117 Jan/Mar '06 **P.O.D.**, Zao, **Maylene**..., Underoath poster, **Sevendust** Says
#118 Mar/Apr '06 **Thrice**, The Classic Crime, The Violet Burning, **Collective Soul Says**
#119 May/Jun '06 **Underoath**, Project 86, Danielson, **Bleeding Through Says**
#121 Sep/Oct '06 **Norma Jean**, Showbread, **mewithoutYou**, Buckcherry Says
#125 May/Jun '07 **The Chariot**, BTA, **Virgin Black**, Skinny Puppy Says, **Chevelle**
#126 Jul/Aug '07 **Project 86**, MxPx, **The Almost poster**, Nodes, **Seventh Star**
#127 Sep/Oct '07 As I Lay Dying, **Paramore**, ABR, As Cities Burn, **Still Remains**
#128 Nov/Dec '07 **Demon Hunter**, Emery, **TDWP**, Chris Cornell Says, Spoken
#129 Jan/Feb '08 **Thrice**, Pillar poster, **Korn Says**, Inked In Blood, A Plea for Purging

ANATHALLO

Photo: Sarah Ji

BY LEVI MACALLISTER

"She leaned back as she was floating really fast down the river and looked up at the canopy of leaves above her as the sun was pouring through them, and that observation was so beautiful to her. Even if it was the last moment she ever had, it was enough."

So inspired the sixth album from this Mt. Pleasant ("nowhere"), Michigan cast of characters, upon hearing the story of how band member Erica Froman's mom was nearly killed wading through a river while hiking the Pacific Crest Trail. "A big theme throughout was how we narrate the lives we have and the kinds of stories we generate in our minds to interpret what's going on around us. Seeing the natural world as something that exists without consciousness. It's there. It doesn't perceive, but we perceive it."

Pianist/guitarist/vocalist/auxiliary-percussionist (too bad he wasn't one that plays the autoharp, trombone or flugelhorn) Matt Joynt has experienced his share of natural phenomena on both sides of the spectrum. The band has talked openly about pulling inspiration from geographical location, and Matt knows the "sense of lost ambiguity" that Mt. Pleasant inspired in previous albums. Now, a city boy, Chicago brought a whole new dynamic for *Canopy Glow*. "It affected the record a lot in the sense that the pacing of the music has a greater rhythmic tightness to it than the other records. I'm on a train, I'm on a bus, I'm walking. There's just this sense of pedestrian movement all the time."

As beliefs differ among cultural diversity of the concrete jungle, so do they among the band. "A mentor of ours once said to us that if you're using music as a way to spread the Gospel, why don't you shoot off some fireworks and stop wasting everybody's time? It was painful to hear from somebody that I really respect, but he was making a point about the inherent value of music. And it gets a little hairy, because less than half of the band are Christians." As proponents of the belief that there is no such thing as "Christian art" (or "Atheist" art, for that matter), Anathallo is not a ministry, but each member is open to discussion. "We're trying to cultivate an approach to life that views the whole world and views the self and the experience of the self as something that is inherently valuable from whatever worldview you're coming from." It's like the idea behind the city. You walk outside and everyone's "up in yo' grill" and there are varying cultures, beliefs, financial situations, backgrounds. "It's big and it's vast and it's angry and it's sweet." Could it be easy to downplay the idea as universalistic? Perhaps, but I think it would be incorrect. We're not talking salvation – we're talking "red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight." We are the city, and we are all valuable.

It's not all philosophical pep talks, don't worry. Whether it be live chaos ("It's like *American Gladiators* on stage…") or goofy photographs ("Whenever we try to do something cool, it just ends up looking ridiculous, so we end up sticking with the funnier, more pathetic version of whatever that is. Unprofessional. That's the vibe.") the only thing missing are the mutants. Matt was Storm at the onset, but after figuring Nightcrawler might be more economically sound, he chose the responsible option. No more planes, tour vans, disposing of natural resources.

"I think I was just being selfish in terms of my own personal interests. I just want to shoot lightning out of my fingers."

anathallo.com

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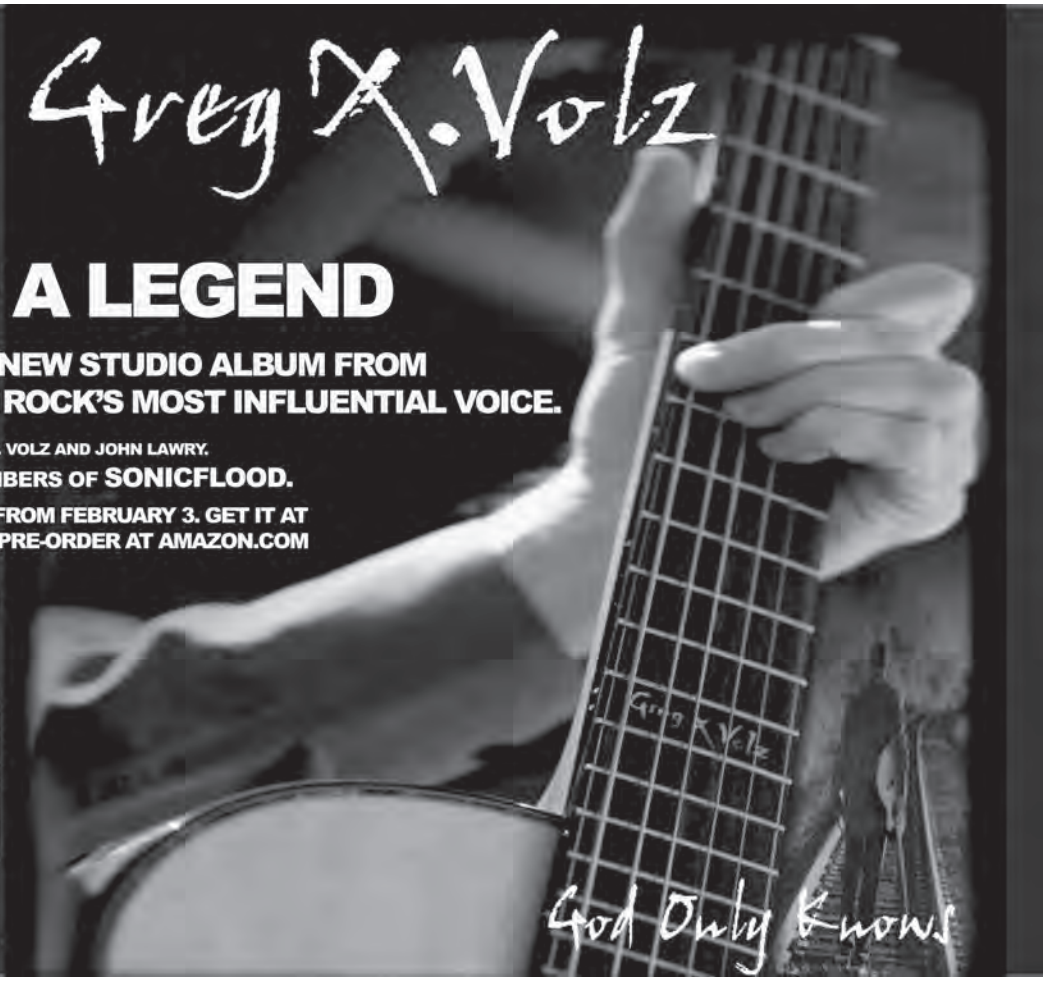

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BROTHERS RYAN AND DON CLARK, THE CREATIVE MASTE
OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL OUTFITS IN UNDERGROUN
HISTORY, DEMON HUNTER.

To say that DH has perfected the art of in-fleshing their sound into a visual phenomenon would be an understatement. This band goes above and beyond to give their fans the best package, the best art, the best album covers, the best online persona, and the best fan community. And they have done it again with their latest, a CD/DVD collection titled *45 Days*. I chatted with frontman Ryan Clark recently about the birth of this, their latest work:

BY ANDREW SCHWAB

What do you think makes this release different than other live/documentary CD/DVDs out there?
I think this release is different than others in a number of ways.

As for the documentary, it was our goal and vision to do something that we've never seen from a metal band. Specifically, we wanted to do something artistic. If you've seen one "documentary" of a metal band, you've seen them all. It's a guy with a cheap camera, filming the band messing around and playing shows. Maybe a few interesting things happen throughout the tour, but it doesn't look good, you know? Then you watch a great documentary like Oasis' *Lord Don't Slow Me Down*, Sigur Ros' *Heima*, or Bob Dylan's classic *Don't Look Back*, and you realize that the metal "bar," so to speak, has been set pretty low. We wanted story line, we wanted artistic photography, we wanted this thing to be absolutely beautiful. We wanted the documentary to be something that would move and inspire people, both emotionally and visually.

On top of that, we didn't want the documentary to just be about us. There's plenty of that out there. We have so many amazing fans with such amazing, heartbreaking, and inspiring stories, that we wanted to let the world know just how incredible these fans are. These stories are what bring the documentary to life.

Aside from the documentary itself, which is really the focal point of this release, we also have a really great live DVD of our performance in Nashville, Tennessee.

As for the music (CD), we wanted to again, do something different. Instead of using pre-existing Demon Hunter songs in the documentary, we wanted to create some music that meshed with the vibe of the film. So we entered the studio to create 8 new songs for use specifically in the documentary. These songs are very different from the regular DH fare, (all instrumental, very raw, very mellow) but our hope is that fans will learn to love them in the appropriate context. In addition to those 8 songs, we also recorded acoustic and piano versions of 2 songs from *Storm The Gates Of Hell*.

Describe the production process of the documentary portion. How was it shot? Were you being followed by cameras all hours of the day or was it more specific to the show context?
We hired a young up-and-coming videographer/photographer named Cale Glendening after stumbling across some work that he'd done online. We could tell that he had an eye for what we wanted, but he was also young, so we assumed he would probably have the time to devote to this project.

Cale came to Seattle about 3 days before we left for tour. For the next 45 days he spent the bulk of each day filming and taking still photos. The incredible thing to realize when you watch the documentary is that it was ALL shot, edited and put together by one guy – Cale. He shot every piece of film, every still photo, every time-lapse sequence. And when he returned home to Tulsa, Oklahoma, after tour, he sat and edited for 3 solid months. This was a one-man production, but when you watch it, it really seems like a huge crew of people.

It was shot hi-def, which was a big plus. It really helps the footage look phenomenal. Everything is in black & white, which gives it a very artistic feel.

Were there any funny/hilarious moments that ended up on the cutting room floor that you want to share?
We joke around quite a bit on the road, and there is a lot of that on the doc itself, but there are also 2 bonus sections on the DVD that showcase some of the ridiculousness that ensued. I know there were a ton of funny moments that didn't make the cut, but nothing in particular comes to mind. I would love to see a cut of all of that extra stuff. We've talked about getting all of that stuff from Cale eventually, but I think he's probably sick of sifting through footage.

You guys are well-known for your strong visual presence ... from websites to album sites to e-cards, to pushing yourselves to find new and creative ways to drive marketing, all based in some of the best art and packaging around. What did you do differently this time around to push yourselves, and how did the final product prove to be unique, even for you?
This release is unique for us, because it showcases our fans. I know a lot of our fans already know how much we appreciate them, but the documentary is a very deep look into that band/fan relationship.

Like I mentioned before, there is just so much white noise out there in the metal scene. So many album covers done by amateurs, so much music that sounds like everyone else, so many DVD's that look like home movies. The standards are non-existent, and I think metal fans have become used to it. Unfortunately, I don't think a lot of them know what they're missing. Some bands are content with creating music they're proud of, and then they let everything else fall by the wayside. How could you not care about your album cover? And if you do care, how could you hire your cousin to do it, just out of charity – just to "hook up" a buddy? That's really nice, but where's the quality? We're determined to give fans their money's worth. That means 100% quality, 100% of the time. Nothing is an afterthought. Everything this band releases will be top notch.

Plans for 2009 for Demon Hunter?
We don't have anything set in stone for 2009 yet, but we do plan on staying active. Our hope is to play some shows, write some more music, and with any luck, get started on a new record. I think people know at this point that DH likes to keep the records coming, and we love creating new music, we love the studio atmosphere. Hopefully this DVD/CD release will hold our fans at bay until we have the chance to put together some new material. We're always planning way ahead, so the wheels are already in motion. I've got a lot of song ideas, both musically and lyrically, bouncing around in my head, and it's just a matter of time before I get the chance to bring them to life.

✖

**RACHIEVEMENT FROM
RMINDS BEHIND ONE
D METAL IN RECENT**

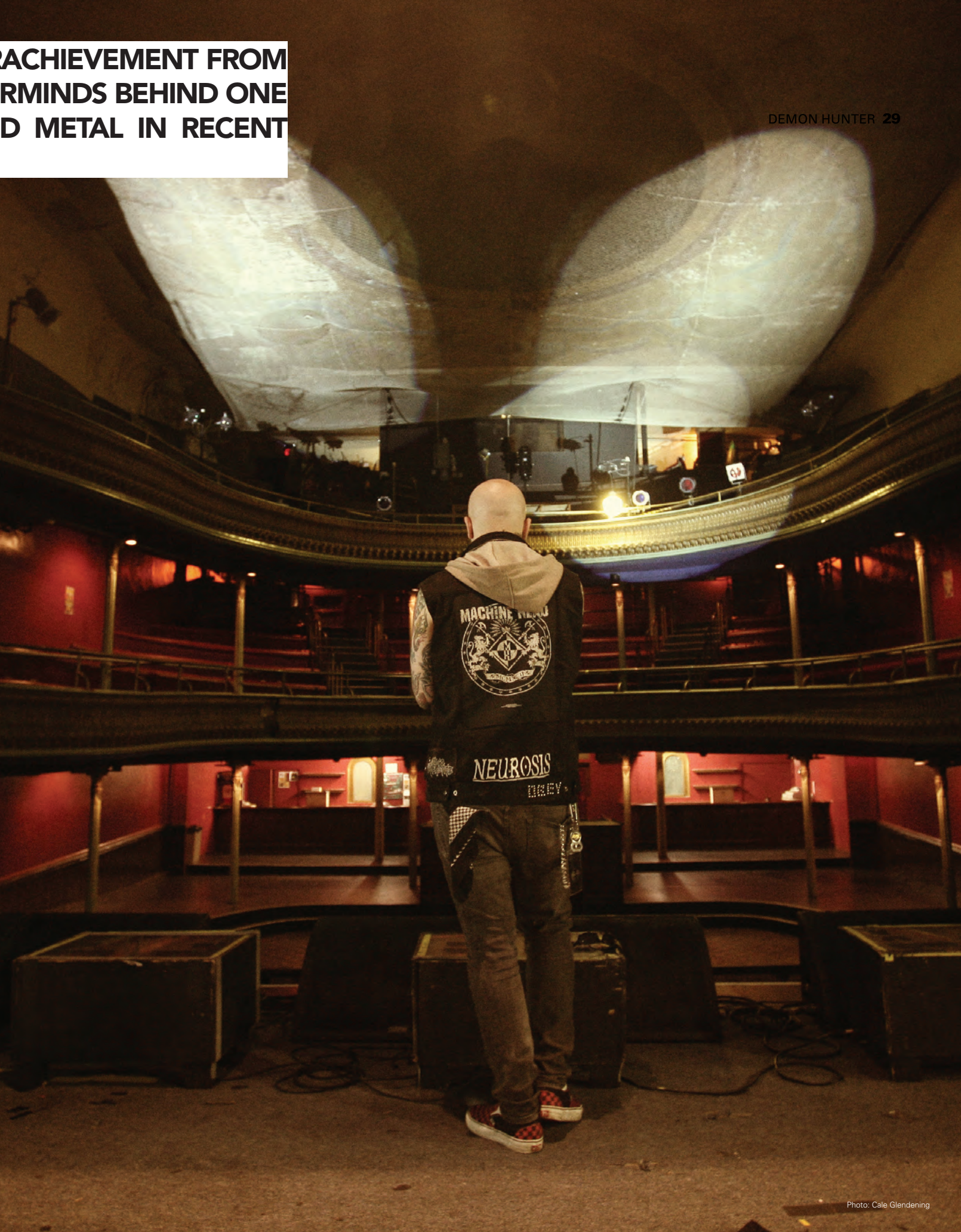


Photo: Cale Glendening

Denison Witmer

The three years of silence between albums for Denison Witmer doesn't include the typical artistic rotation of songwriting, touring, rinse, repeat. The normal ebbs and flows for a musician in today's industry instead took a backseat to things more important for Witmer: building a home and caring for a sick friend.

"This time has been very strange, actually," says Witmer. "I was set to make a record a couple of years ago, but I took the opportunity to buy a house in Philadelphia. It's a project I've always wanted to do – to buy my own house and fix it up. So I did that instead and spent a lot of time just working on it. That took up a lot more time that I thought. Then a friend of mine unfortunately also got cancer and there really weren't that many options for people who could come and stay with him. So I ended up doing that for several months."

Witmer insists the sonic Sabbath wasn't a waste. Instead, he describes this season of his life away from the industry as a creative help, with the ability to take the time and preparation to truly consider his next recording.

"Even though I like consistently releasing records more often than every three years, there are things that I enjoy in my life other than recording and touring. It was just nice to have a break and clear my head and do something I was interested in other than making music. The house was something that was creative and I was working with my hands, giving me a lot of time to think about what I wanted to create."

Not only was time on Witmer's side, but Denison also had an inordinate amount of songs to choose from. Even though his fans held nothing new, that didn't mean the songwriting behind the scenes had slowed to a halt.

"I'm constantly writing – that's the thing. I'm writing songs all the time. Over the last three years, I've probably written 60 songs and it's nice to be able to look at a collection of songs and see what works well. I had a lot of time to think about it, so much so that when I went to do it, it felt like the process was a lot more efficient. Overall, it was a great thing."

Denison's final output comes to us in the form of *Carry the Weight*, a much more somber, realistic effort than 2005's hope-filled *Are You A Dreamer?* Witmer reasons that it's even a proper response to his last album, given the conflict surrounding him on a global and personal level.

"As I said, a friend of mine was diagnosed with cancer in October two years ago," explains Witmer. "Living with them, he was a real inspiration to me. He would get really bad diagnosis after really bad diagnosis and he could have easily given in to all that stuff. Being with him was inspirational and then also really hard. Not for me, obviously, but it's hard to watch a person go through anything bad like that."

"In a way, *Carry The Weight* ended up being this rebuttal argument to my last record, whereas *Are You A Dreamer?* was all about getting into hope and mystery," he continues. "I still subscribe to that, but I wasn't really buying what I was selling with that. There was some time with my friend and another relationship had ended during this time and the political situation of our country with the war, etc. I just wasn't feeling very hopeful these last couple of years, so this album became an argument wondering whether you really buy this hope or whether it's this naive way of looking at the world. I wrote the record as this argument and trying to come to terms with all of this."

Helping him handle the tension between the albums are the familiar faces we're used to seeing when looking at Witmer's work. Blake Wescott (Pedro The Lion, Seldom) returns as producer from 2001's *Of Joy and Sorrow*, of which Witmer explains, "He's just a good friend and great engineer. He and I worked together before and I've always wanted to make another record with him. This one seemed right. As far as other musicians, we kind of limited ourselves. We didn't want too many cooks in the kitchen. He and I together have a pretty good idea of what we wanted to do, but it was good to rely on a few people out there in Seattle who I had worked with in the past." The others allowed inside include Sufjan Stevens' drummer James MacAllister and long-time friend and recording artist Rosie Thomas.

When dealing with such heavy, thoughtful material, Witmer found it important to surround himself with the proper musicians and engineers to help him deliver the important songs found on The Militia Group release. "I think we try to find people who understand me as a person to work with in the studio," says Witmer. "Because I find there's a lot less explaining to go down when someone knows where you're coming from. When they approach the songs as your friend, there's a different sensitivity to it. It's just that they understand me as a person. I guess it wouldn't be a stretch to make records with strangers, but the connection just isn't there as compared to someone who you've spent time driving around the country with in a van or flying around the country and having those conversations that have nothing to do with music. When people really know you and know where you're coming from, you're working on something that just feels a little bit deeper than if you didn't have those relationships. It's just always felt more natural to me to work with those who know me as a person."

Even as fans await *Carry the Weight*, Denison continues to give them new music in some form, most recently through his covers endeavor. Each week, Witmer selects a song such as Oasis's "Wonderwall" and posts the song for free download on his MySpace.

"For me it's just been about staying creative and having fun. It's not that this isn't a time for songwriting, because it definitely is for me. But I just don't feel compelled to work on my own songs, especially since I have a new record coming out and I'm going to be playing those new songs night after night. If I start writing new music right now, I'm going to be really anxious to get back into the studio and my record hasn't even come out yet. So I figured I would go through a catalog of music I love and just pick some songs and distill them down to acoustic guitar and vocal and do something simple with them."

For listeners to the new album, the music reveals a patience well rewarded. *Carry The Weight* displays a thoughtful, creative artist willing to let the music develop as it needs to and that Witmer can simply keep himself occupied in the meantime.

✖

BY MATT CONNER

The Divine I

AT HOME WITH CRIMSON MOONLIGHT'S FRONTMAN

BY ANDERS NORDSTRÖM

The September night lies cold outside of Korpasen cottage in the eerie woods of Sweden's Smaland county. The smell of tar cuts through crisp air as a raven croaks. Apart from that, not a sound. Tired moonlight is chasing shadows but the midnight dark prevails. This is what black metal lyrics are made of – fairytale to most. Natural surroundings to a few.

Darkness

Photos, clockwise from top:

Iconostasis. Inside the cottage there is an altar where both Christ and angels are depicted. "An icon is something you write, not something you paint. It is theology on canvas."

Icy. Pilgrim and your humble scribbler jump from fridge to freezer. "This was the last lake shower of the season. Oh my, that was cold."

The Raven's Ridge. The cottage estate of Pilgrim Bestiarius is called Korpåsen, which translates to "Raven's Ridge." A fitting name for a cottage loft where the raven's croak is all you might hear for an entire night.

Tar Dinner. The gloves that Pilgrim used to tar the cottage. "People are full of crap. Tar is not dangerous at all. I have tasted tar and it was alright."

The Fire. "In these days we have replaced the fire with the TV. It's degradation and betrayal."

Ecclesiastes. Eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart.

Rays of light reach from the tiny windows of the cottage and the silhouette of a man can be made out. Therein sits Pilgrim Bestiarius – frontman of Crimson Moonlight, Scandinavia's grimmest viking metal outfit.

Photos by Anders Nordström

"The fascination with vikings and the middle ages stems from the music," Pilgrim says inside the cottage as he strokes his fiery beard.

"In black metal there is a common interest in past times. And passion for the barren and plain."

Pilgrim Bestiarius is not his Christian name. Actually, that's exactly what it is, but it isn't his given name. In the old Church Books, in which the entire population of Sweden was once registered, men of the cloth would have written Simon Rosén (a name just as suiting as that of his stage name – Simon as the Zealot, often referred to as the more obscure of the Christ's apostles; Rosén for his red cloak of hair and beard). Church and state have long since separated, and he is Simon Rosén to the state computers. To the church he is still known as Pilgrim, and fans and friends would refer to him as nothing else. He is the singer for Crimson Moonlight – a Christian black metal band, which plays an extreme form of music that is only on par with their own image: drenched in blood and armed to the teeth with Slayeresque nail-studded gauntlets, leather masks, and brandishing swords, but always abundantly clear that their focus is on Christ.

A good number of Americans have witnessed Crimson Moonlight live on the band's transatlantic trips. We all know the drill (and have witnessed the fair amount of blood spilled). So, when *HM Magazine* visits Pilgrim Bestiarius in his home, we assume that his extroverted stage presence is the antithesis of a solitary life in a countryside cottage. But each passing moment in the cottage illustrates how betraying that assumption is. Both extremes have everything to do with each other.

"People involved in black metal talk about simple living as an ideal, but it would seem that it is nothing more that just that. Talk. Because I don't see a whole lot of people taking it any further." It's a bold statement coming from a very humble man.

To answer your question right away: Yes, the infamous VBS.tv episode in which Gaahl (of Norwegian satanists Gorgoroth) treks a herd of young American filmmakers up the snowy hillside to his very own cottage does spring to mind. This would indicate that Pilgrim and Gaahl have one thing in common. One thing only, though.

"This is a lifestyle and I take it very seriously," Pilgrim says as he rises from the table to fetch water from the well outside. "It's not like I just took a sword and hung it on the wall," he mumbles through his beard on the way out.

He has a point. From where I sit I can see at least three swords. And an equal number of war hammers and axes. Add to that drinking horns, wooden tools, and hauberks enough to supply a full viking horde. Or the official Amon Amarth fan club for that matter. Even the garden outside is crowned with religious symbols and ornaments of wood and metal, but I guess Pilgrim is speaking of a life of quality and not one of quantity. And in whatever light – or darkness, for that matter – you choose to see this life, it is a statement (though there may not be very many people close by to witness it).

Built some three hundred years ago, the cottage shows that more can be less. With neither electricity nor running water, it's obvious that the outhouse is not floor heated. While enjoying the privacy of that particular establishment, however cold it might be, one will soon come to the conclusion that it offers a luxury the lot of us can not afford – the luxury of peace and quiet.

The cottage door opens with a bang as the host returns carrying a bucket of water. "I could've sworn the water bore the rotten taste of carcass earlier on. Turns out I was right."

He's tightened the lid of the well numerous times, but it just won't help. Snails still fall through the traitorous lid, facing death by drowning in the water.

"But I got 'em snails out of there now," he says as he hands me another cup. We sit down at the hand carved table, thanking the good Lord for His many blessings: meat, fish, cheese, and ale. Good bread. And tasty water from the well.

As we eat, Pilgrim speaks of his life in the cottage. Of the cold winter mornings, he says that, "thick woolen oversocks do the trick." Heat also comes with company. While some friends visit for a day, others stay for months. Pilgrim's dear friend Othar (of Dutch metal band Slechtvalk) once stayed in the cottage for an entire season, while renovating the cottage loft. "Next weekend a bunch of Hollanders are dropping by. They are just as wonderful as they are crazy," Pilgrim laughs. Saying that Pilgrim loves the company of

Sanctuary. "This is a home for feasts and recreation, for prayer and work – ora et labora."

"This is a lifestyle and I take it very seriously," Pilgrim says as he rises from the table to fetch water from the well outside. *"It's not like I just took a sword and hung it on the wall,"* he mumbles through his beard on the way out.

people would be an understatement, but truth is that he moved into these woods to come closer to God in a solitude he refers to as "the most beautifully untouched."

During our meal (between the many episodes of laughter), I ask Pilgrim how he would describe God.

"I wouldn't!" he interrupts confidently, implying that the question is erroneous. Our conversation then turns into a discussion regarding the fairly apophatic perception of God that the lord of the manner holds.

"I prefer to speak of God by negation, through all that which He is not. He is not bound by time and space. He is in essence completely inscrutable, transcendent, and the One Who (is) the complete opposite. Through the incarnation of the Christ, God is only conceivable as being even more unfathomable."

Silence follows. And then some. Finally Pilgrim surprises me and quite possibly himself as he formulates a description of Who or What God really is – "He is the treasure of all things good."

When he is not recording, rehearsing, or writing new material with Crimson Moonlight, Pilgrim attends classes as part of a traditional pastoral training. But his deep water exploration into ancient orthodox mysticism is probably something he has grown to love on his own in the swampy backyard of his humble home.
"The more we learn about God, the better we understand that we know nothing at all," Pilgrim sighs. His ideas are not his own. On the contrary, he draws much inspiration (and is not late in pointing it out) from saints and the old church fathers. He keeps returning to orthodox liturgy and mysticism, St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Irenaeus of Lyons. And the teachings of the divine darkness.

"In the end, God's light shines so brightly that (it) turns into darkness." Pilgrim's face lights up with a smile that cracks his thick beard wide open. By now words are redundant, for I already know why he smiles. Herein lies the essence of true black metal.

We end our day together in front of the altar in the heart of the cottage. Pilgrim repeats the words like a mantra; words as timeless as the silence outside: "Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Now and forever. And from eternity to eternity.

"And so we rest. In Divine Darkness."

✖

Photos, from left bottom:

Hindsight. "If we would have looked back every now and then, and learned from the history, then perhaps we wouldn't make such a mess of everything," says Pilgrim. His cottage has neither electricity nor running water. Through simple living he seeks God's creation rather than the works of man.

The mask. "Our warlike outfits serve as a reminder of the spiritual battle."

Focus. In Pilgrim's home, Christ is in the center. Always.

AS I LAY DYING

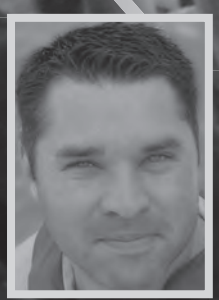
Photo: Stephanie Cabral

Staff Picks

CHAD OLSON
Favorite Albums:
Trenches – *The Tide Will Swallow...*
P.O.D. – *When Angles & Serpents...*
The Famine – *The Raven and the...*
Living Sacrifice – *Death Machine* EP
Soul Embraced – *Dead Alive*

Favorite Live Show:
Demon Hunter / Living Sacrifice / ...

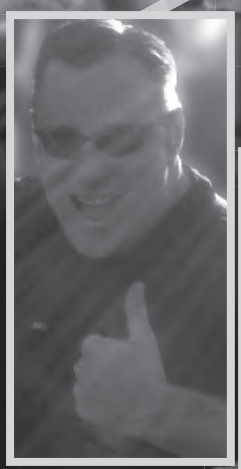
Favorite Indie/Unsigned Artist:
Living Sacrifice



DR. TONY SHORE
Favorite Albums:
Starflyer 59 – *Dial M For Murder*
Seventy Sevens – *Holy Ghost Building*
Deas Vail – *White Lights*
Jonezetta – *Cruel To Be Young*
Daniel Amos – *Darn Floor Big Bite*

Favorite Live Show:
Sixpence None The Richer

Favorite Indie/Unsigned Artist:
Sixpence None The Richer



BRIAN QUINCY NEWCOMB
Favorite Albums:
Seventy Sevens – *Holy Ghost Building*
R.E.M. – *Accelerate*
Third Day – *Revelation*
TV on the Radio – *Dear Science*
Jon Foreman – *Limbs and Branches*

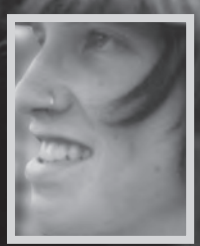
Favorite Live Show:
Seventy Sevens

Favorite Indie/Unsigned Artist:
Jonathan Rundman

DOUG VAN PELT
Favorite Albums:
Austrian Death Machine – *Total Brutal*
The Becoming – *Vol. I*
Starflyer 59 – *Dial M for Murder*
Anberlin – *New Surrender*
P.O.D. – *When Angels & Serpents...*

Favorite Live Show:
Leeland

Favorite Indie/Unsigned Artist:
Larry Norman



LEVI MACALLISTER
Favorite Albums:
Norma Jean – *The Anti-Mother*
Lovedrug – *The Sucker Punch Show*
Underoath – *Lost In The Sound of...*
My Epic – *I Am Undone*
Wrench in the Works – *Lost Art of...*

Favorite Live Show:
Underoath

Favorite Indie/Unsigned Artist:
The Bayonet

NATHAN DOYLE
Favorite Albums:
Gwen Stacy – *The Life I Know*
Thrice – *The Alchemy Index, Vol. III, Air*
Underoath – *Lost in the Sound...*
Once Nothing – *First Came the Law*
Thrice – *The Alchemy Index, Vol. IV, Earth*

Favorite Live Show:
Oh, Sleeper

Favorite Indie/Unsigned Artist:
In the Midst of Lions

BRAD MOIST
Favorite Albums:
House of Heroes – *The End is not the End*
John Mark McMillan – *The Medicine*
Corey Crowder – *Gold & The Sand*
Verra Cruz – *Innocence*
The Showdown – *Back Breaker*

Favorite Live Show:
Underoath

Favorite Indie/Unsigned Artist:
John Mark McMillan

'08

TIM HALLILA
Favorite Albums:
Underoath – *Lost in the Sound of...*
Thrice – *The Alchemy Index*
Copeland – *You Are My Sunshine*
The New Frontiers – *Mending*
Norma Jean – *The Anti-Mother*

Favorite Live Show:
Thrice

Favorite Indie/Unsigned Artist:
Tod The Fox

MATT CONNER
Favorite Albums:
Paper Route – *Are We All Forgotten*
The Myriad – *With Arrows, With Poise*
Denison Witmer – *Carry The Weight*
Lovedrug – *The Sucker Punch Show*
Above the Golden State – *S/T*

Favorite Live Show:
Switchfoot

Favorite Indie/Unsigned Artist:
Sunbears

JOHN J. THOMPSON
Favorite Albums:
The Becoming – *Vol. I*
Leeland – *Opposite Way*
Raconteurs – *Consolers of the Lonely*
Jon Foreman – The Season EP's
Over The Rhine – *The Trumpet Child*

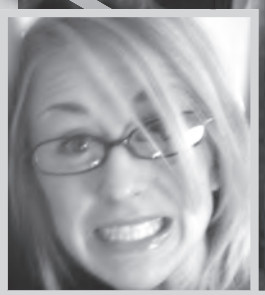
Favorite Live Show:
Buddy Miller (& friends, Jayhawks)

Favorite Indie/Unsigned Artist:
Luminate

HALEY GLASCO
Favorite Albums:
John Mark McMillan – *The Medicine*
Patty Griffin – *Live from the Artist's Den*
Jon Foreman – The Season EP's
The Myriad – *With Arrows With Poise*
Dizmas – S/T

Favorite Live Show:
Tom Waits: *Glitter and Doom Tour*

Favorite Indie/Unsigned Artist:
John Mark McMillan



STEVEN LOSEY
Favorite Albums:
Need To Breathe – *The Heat*
The Almost – *Southern Weather*
Family Force 5 – *Dance Or Die*
The Beautiful Republic – *Perceptions*
Sanctus Real – *We Need Each Other*

Favorite Live Show:
Need To Breathe

Favorite Indie/Unsigned Artist:
Altered

JOHN MCENTIRE
Favorite Albums:
Norma Jean – *The Anti Mother*
Trenches – *...and The Tide Will...*
Jon Foreman – The Season EP's
Coldplay – *Viva La Vida*
The Famine – *The Raven and the...*

Favorite Live Show:
Alison Krauss and Robert Plant

Favorite Indie/Unsigned Artist:
Guard Your Steps

ADAM NEWTON
Favorite Albums:
Showbread – *Anorexia Nervosa*
Thrice – *The Alchemy Index*
Damien Jurado – *Caught in the Trees*
Joy Electric – *My Grandfather...*
Bon Voyage – *Lies*

Favorite Live Show:
Norma Jean

Favorite Indie/Unsigned Artist:
Tambersauro

Red

DEFINING THEMSELVES

BY DAVID STAGG

AS THEY'RE DRIVING THROUGH MY HOME STATE OF TEXAS, I GET A HOLD OF RED'S MAIN SONGWRITER AND GUITARIST JASEN RAUCH, AND SURE ENOUGH, THE RECEPTION IS TERRIBLE. THEY'RE IN WEST TEXAS AND WHEN YOU GO FROM SMALL TOWN TO SMALL TOWN OUT THERE, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET VERY LUCKY WITH THE RECEPTION IN BETWEEN. THE BAND IS ON THEIR WAY TO AMARILLO FROM DALLAS (ACCORDING TO THEIR DRIVER – WHOM I OVERHEAR RAUCH CALL "HOLLYWOOD" – THEY'RE ABOUT THREE HOURS AWAY) TO PLAY A SHOW WITH PUDDLE OF MUDD.

BY ANDREW SCHWAB

Photo: Caleb Kuhl

Photo: Caleb Kuhl

They've actually been on tour with the Mudd guys before. This time, the band got the call from the Puddle of Mudd people asking if they'd like to come out again; they needed a band to play right before they go on. Of course they obliged; their audiences are awfully similar. A whole lot of radio rock tours – think Breaking Benjamin, Three Days Grace. "Some fans will come see Puddle of Mudd, some will only have been exposed to us based on radio airplay," Rauch says. "Same thing with us. We have similar radio exposure. Stylistically, though, we're a little different."

I can't argue with him; I don't know a whole heck of a lot of Puddle of Mudd songs. But what I do know from PoM hits is that Puddle of Mudd is radio rock at its best. So when I pop in Red's sophomore release, *Instinct and Innocence*, expecting something similar, I'm somewhat surprised I don't hear a Papa Roach, Creed, Puddle of Mudd rip off. Rauch wasn't kidding when he said that, stylistically, they're different.

The Nashville quintent Red (Rauch, vocalist Michael Barnes, identical twin brothers Randy and Anthony Armstrong on bass and guitar respectively, and drummer Hayden Lamb) managed to get somewhat lucky. Their first release, *End of Innocence,* was nominated for a Grammy. It has sold over 250,000 copies and has had any number of milestones a record label can give to a writer to hype their band. And while every band wants a hit record, every time, they're posed with the same, imminent next question: Where do we go next?

Rauch agrees with me on one thing: You don't want to put out the same record twice. He knew it and most fans would agree. "It came down to what made Red, Red," he says, and to stick with that. "On top of exposure from radio and the tours we've been fortunate enough to get on, we had to find the things that the fans attached themselves to. The goal is to mature and grow and make things better than the previous record."

They found out what did work: strings and synth. It's what I would say as a listener almost defines the sound of their *Innocence and Instinct*. It gives it the eerie, haunting feel Rauch was looking for when writing the record with the band over any number of dates on tour, in hotels, and in the backs of buses. "It gives it a whole different dynamic with programming and strings," he says. "We had to keep that there on the second record."

Either way, it was hard for them to forget what brought them to where they are now: Every night while writing *Innocence and Instinct*, they're out on tour, playing the old songs every night anyway. They were forced into a link with their debut record. "Bringing in the live element, we got to play the songs off our first record every night," Rauch says. "We got to constantly re-connect with our old material, the material that made the old record. It kept us grounded."

And while most of the writing process was done on the road ("Eighty percent of it on the road," he says, "and I mean in hotel rooms and in the studio in the back of the bus"), they did actually record the Red-style strings and synth live with an orchestra. "We had over three separate string sessions," Rauch says, cutting in and out on his cell phone for a second as West Texas flies by him outside. "All of it done in Nashville. David Davidson did a lot of the string arrangements. He's a friend of ours and he has an amazing ability to see something, see the landscape we wanted, and despite the fact that he's heavily classically influenced and trained, he understands rock and pop music."

It provided a perfect border for the record, adding in the extra layer to give it the Red dynamic. I tell him it must have been tough writing a record like that when you're on tour with radio rock bands, because, while the record's not anti-radio, it definitely has a brooding, extended metaphor that lends itself to listening to the album in one sitting. Turns out, playing with the pop bands kept them down to earth. It provided an outlet for them to keep writing with a pop sense in mind, but still exploring the darker parts of music. Just don't call it a concept record.

"We definitely didn't want to do a 'concept record,'" Rauch says, "because for us there are so many elements. In a concept record, it seems the songs don't typically do as good of a job standing on their own. We wanted each song to have its own identity and stand on its own." And in that sense, the pop music helped them. You can have a coherent album and still have different tracks, even if the flow of the album lends itself to listening to the whole thing

"One of the things we used as an inspiration was a lot of the different stuff I had been reading at the time," he says. "Dante and The Divine Comedy and Paradise Lost and the themes between the war between heaven and hell. Go look at the original illustrations to The Inferno. Gustave Doré did a lot of the real woodcarvings back in the 19th century for the stories. They're these really cool, beautiful, dark images. It's what I wanted the record to sound like."

at once. "We listened to a lot of pop music when we wrote the record, being on the road with nothing but radio bands," he says. "We were surrounding ourselves with that; we just tackled it in a different way. We just added that haunting element, trying to further define Red and that delicate balance with strings, minor keys, and things that lend itself to that."

But it's not just the tone of the music that got the record where it is. Inspiration doesn't always come from the record you've been listening to on repeat. Rauch was doing a lot of immersion in spiritually haunting things, mainly darker literature. "One of the things we used as an inspiration was a lot of the different stuff I had been reading at the time," he says. "Dante and *The Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost* and the themes between the war between heaven and hell. Go look at the original illustrations to *The Inferno*. Gustave Doré did a lot of the real woodcarvings back in the 19th century for the stories. They're these really cool, beautiful, dark images. It's what I wanted the record to sound like."

He continued on almost immediately into one of the themes of the record: the struggle of coming out, of defining yourself. It mirrors the band's struggle with defining Red as Red. "I was going through a lot of personal things in my life and 1500 years ago these people were doing the same thing – and we can still understand what they're talking about," Rauch says. "It was a huge influence. There's a lot of talk about the struggle of self. In the writing process of reading some of that stuff, the poets and authors would find that small, dark place where I felt I was going, and writing the same struggle."

It still impresses me that the record is so coherent. As Rauch put it, they had to be "creative" with the process. When you're recording the strings and synth parts in the green room at one of your shows, then laying down guitars in the back of your tour bus, and then recording the vocals in an empty hotel room two days later, it's striking to me the record has such a consistent feel. I can't imagine recording it that way, let alone writing the record using the same processes. "The old subject matter that made the old record, constantly re-connecting with the old songs and old material … not only is this what Red is, but this is what was working for us. It gave writing and recording the new record the same vision, with a new influence."

It still made me wonder, with a Grammy nomination lurking over their debut release, how much they tried to distance themselves from the sound of that record. You don't want to fix what's not broken. "From my perspective," Rauch says, "we definitely wanted to have points that people could connect between the two releases. We still wanted to have those things, but stretch it a little bit further. I could play a random person three or four songs and they'd think (*Innocence and Instinct*) was a catchy pop record. We wanted to have a little bit of success at radio, and with the influence from all the bands on the road, we could still use that platform to connect with people."

I tell him it sounds like playing live and being forced into recording the record in such an erratic manner could have been the best thing that happened to him. From where I was sitting, it sounds like if the band holed up in a remote location for two months and tried to put the animal together, it'd be like literally reading *Paradise Lost*. I told him the record seems like it would have been inaccessible. He laughs and says I might be right; there was a point in the recording process in pre-production where they could do that. Where songs were coming from all kinds of left field. But when they went back out on the road, it brought the objectivity back to the music.

"That challenge was definitely there," he says, referring to bridging the gap from left field to radio rock record. "We had the freedom at one point to do anything we wanted. No parameters. We could stretch our creative wings there. But looking back, it presented an interesting challenge." A challenge that, when they saw their fans at shows and kept in touch with them, gave way to what defines Red. "You know, we truly enjoy the connection we have with fans live," he continues. "Having that connection, we can see what songs the crowd would enjoy the most. Sure, we try new things, different tunings, song structures, different vocal styles. But at the end of the day, it was easy to decipher what made Red, Red."

✖

The Almost

UNOFFICIAL MEMOIRS...

BY LEVI MACALLISTER

"WE HAD TO STOP AT THIS ONE PLACE – A TINY LITTLE VENUE THAT HOLDS THREE HUNDRED PEOPLE. THEY PUT FOUR HUNDRED IN THAT NIGHT. IT WAS LITERALLY THE HOTTEST I'VE EVER BEEN. I THINK THEY SAID IT WAS 130 DEGREES IN THE BUILDING. THE SECOND SONG IN AND OUR DRUMMER HAD THROWN UP, OUR GUITAR TECH HAD THROWN UP, OUR TOUR MANAGER HAD THROWN UP … EVERYBODY WAS PUKING EVERYWHERE. THE SECOND SONG IN AND I, UH … I CRAPPED MY PANTS."

"NO ONE FOUND OUT. I MEAN, I GUESS THEY WILL NOW … OBVIOUSLY."

Yes, my good sir, the picture was just too beautiful an introduction to pass up.

But hey! If it's any testament to the dedication that Aaron Gillespie and Co. have for their fans, I say take them out for a juicy after-show steak. Shoot … buy them two and shrink-wrap a third for the road. Who the heck else is going to finish out an entire set with a load in their pants and the rest of the band dying of heat stroke? "It was terrible. My wife was laughing at me and stuff. She was laughing her freakin' butt off."

I've got to admit, I came into the interview a little unnerved. You want an honest story? Well, here it is – this dude's one of my heroes: the closest I've come to the whole dumbfounded "star-struck" thing. I've read every interview (I'll be the cheese-ball, it's cool) and played every CD 'till they were worn past the point of a laser's readings. 'Don't screw this up, kid,' is what I'm thinking. So, here we go … opening line … ready! The clincher:

"Aaron! Well, uh … hmmm … thanks for, uh, you know, (ahem), (cough), takin' a little bit of, uh – (excuse me – swallow) – time, to … you know – talk to (gulp) me."

It's times like this that your heart sinks just a little bit and you realize how incredibly and irrevocably godawful you've just ruined first impressions. Thank God, he was gracious, and once I stopped mumbling sweet nothings through the phone line, we finally built our relationship up to the heart of matters.

"This EP is kind of like a last 'me by myself' thing here. From here on out it will be a band thing." With *No Gift to Bring* covering songs like "Little Drummer Boy," "Amazing (Because It Is)" and "Your Love is Extravagant" – it's not hard to see the guy's heart for the Lord.

"It's humbling and strange, to think about the omnipotence-y and sovereignty of God, and how He's created such a personal thing with people. It's so bizarre that we somehow, through Christ, have the ability to be friends with God. And that's just weird. I was reading Jeremiah yesterday and you think about: back in the day, when people messed up, there was so much to go through. There was so much to obtain to become clean again. It's crazy how God decided that it needed to be easy for us. I don't understand that. That is something that, especially being married, you really take a look at, and you're like … 'Wow.' How are you supposed to love your wife? Like Christ loved the church. And I think that when He said, 'the church,' He meant people. I think it's bizarre that we're so dirty and normal, and yet we get to have personal friendships with the Creator of the universe. I think it's simple stuff like that that I kind of wanted to get back to. The recording's really simple, it's acoustic. I think that I complicate things too much.

"Back in the day, when I was a kid, I never knew that any of this stuff was a possibility. Buses and trucks and lighting and 30-foot TV screens and airplanes and Africa and, at the end of the day, I never even knew that stuff existed. I just wanted to play the drums. Make music. So I think for me, the whole EP is important to become 'that way.' Christ talked about it all the time – becoming like a little child in your faith. Kids are ignorant, you know? I'm not saying to become ignorant, but to become humble in the way that you trust in things."

Those are big words; especially in this day and age where stardom is key and fame is fortune. It's not like Aaron hasn't been successful in his endeavors, either. But I think we over-glamorize glamour. I think we miss the forest for the trees. "I've been home for eight days since June. I've been on tour for seven months – straight. You don't know what city you're in, what day it is. It really is hard. It does get robotic. My biggest issue is learning to love every minute of it and use every opportunity I have for Christ. And that's really hard sometimes when you're jetlagged and burnt out and eating dinner and want to go to sleep. I guess you wake up every day and realize that every day is a gift from God. So, I'm really thankful for it."

So, how do you maintain positivity? How do you deal with the road without burning out, and how do you do it without burning out on God? Let's be honest, there's a definite laissez-faire approach taken to spirituality and conventional Christianity in our culture. Certainly it's not specific to the music scene, but our generation gives itself to enough experimentation with "spiritual freedoms" to flirt with taking advantage of God's graces. Why do you stay true to following Jesus instead of branching out with the whole, "Sin more that grace may abound" cop-out?

"I think that I do experiment with this and that. You know? I'm definitely not proud of some of the stuff that I've done in my life. I've made a bad representation of Christ. So, I guess the answer I have is just that I deal with stuff just like the next guy. I think that anybody who says they haven't is in a pretty weird spot, too. But it is true. I think things are becoming more idealistic, and more liberal, and more… I'm not sure of the correct adjective. But I know at the end of the day that my life was bought at a price. I know that sounds like what your mom told you. But it's true."

I was planning on asking the man why he recorded "Little Drummer Boy" for the upcoming EP. Just picture how dumb of a question that would've been? Just feel the awkward silence as he catches his tongue and thinks to himself, "Well, I'm a drummer, dummy!" It would've been better than the introduction. Perhaps *No Gift to Bring* brings the finest gift of all – a heart of gratitude, an attitude of humility, and an offering of worship. A boy banging on his drums.

"Shall I play for you? I played my drum for Him… I played my best for Him, pa rum pum pum pum. Then He smiled at me, pa rum pum pum pum – Me and my drum."

✖

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What ill nino Says

THIS WAS ONE OF THE WEIRDEST INTERVIEWS I'VE EVER DONE. IT WAS KIND OF FUN, BUT WHOLLY DIFFERENT, IN THAT I SAT IN THE BACK OF THE TOUR BUS WITH ILL NINO. THROUGHOUT DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE INTERVIEW, DIFFERENT MEMBERS WOULD WANDER IN AND OFFER THEIR ANSWERS TO VARIOUS QUESTIONS. IT CAPTURES A FUN-LOVING BAND THAT WAS RIDING RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NU METAL WAVE THAT WAS JUST STARTING TO RECEDE. THE INTERVIEW ALSO WAS UNUSUAL IN THAT IT GOT A LITTLE ROUGH AT TIMES; AND THERE WERE MOMENTS WHERE THEY WERE TALKING AS MUCH TO EACH OTHER AS WITH THE INTERVIEWER. IT PROBABLY WASN'T TOO DIFFERENT THAN DOZENS OF OTHER CONVERSATIONS HAPPENING IN AND AROUND THE NOW-DEFUNCT BAR, THE BACK ROOM, BUT IT WAS JUST KINDA WEIRD.

Photo: Myriam Santos-Kayda

Where'd you guys grow up? In New Jersey?
Um, I grew up, I guess kind of half of my life in New Jersey. I moved to the U.S. when I was 12. I'm Cristian. The whole band's based out of New Jersey and everybody's lived there for a while … I just joined the band about a half a year ago. They're all East side – I'm West side.

So, what's the short history, the short story, on the history of the band?
Um, well, in the beginning there was a big explosion… We pretty much just asked a whole bunch of our friends or people that we knew to join the band and start doing shows with us. Just pretty much play it out, try to have fun at first. Dave (Chavarri) had come out of Broken, which was, you know, like a hardcore underground band.

Mmhmm, cool band.
He knew I wanted to do something a little bit different, and so did he, so we hooked up and recorded a demo at Laz (Pina)'s studio. So that's how we hooked up with him. He's got a little studio and he was always kind of involved with the band. Even though he wasn't in the band in the beginning, he was always there. So we asked him to play bass. Jardel (Paisante) was in a local band that was, pretty much doing the same thing we were trying to do, so I thought he'd be a cool cat to have in the band playing with us. Then, we've got Mark Rizzo and Roger, which departed the band before the recording of this record. They came into the band just to be in a local band in the area. Ahrue (Luster) was from Machine Head, so when Mark left the band, he was like my number one man, out of all the guitar players to come and jam with us. (Turns to Ahrue) Well, you weren't our number one pick, but we had high hopes for you.
[laughter]
And he came, jammed out, and everything was beautiful. So, we chained him. And Danny (Couto) was actually in the same band that I stole Jardel from. So, you know, we stole Jardel, and then Danny kind of stayed playing with that band, and then we needed a percussion player. We knew that Danny was the one to ask.

So what inspires having so many players in the band?
Um, I guess doing something a little bit more different than the traditional, you know, heavy metal or hard rock thing. Like just drums, guitars, bass and vocals. We wanted the music to be really diverse. To cross over into a lot of different areas. Pretty much to just be everything that we listen to. Even with like, Ahrue and Danny, I think that there is no particular favorite type of music that we have. We each have our own favorite, but I don't think you could necessarily ask each one of us, "Hey what's your favorite band?" and have one of us be like, "It's Metallica," or, "It's The Beatles." We strive to have a lot of different influences to our music. And you can't really do it with just a guitar, a bass, and drums nowadays. Everything's kind of been done. So, we wanted to be a little bit more original than that.

I think, like, everybody in the band listens to so many different styles of music. I mean, like, I'd probably say every style of music in this band is covered – except country. But the one thing that I think ties us together is we all grew up on heavy music, on metal. That's the one thread that we have in common.

At least through our teenage years, you know. We were all, like, metalheads in one way or another. Except for Omar, who did work on our first record, and our second record, and now he's actually in the band, so we have more members now. Seven of us. I remember hanging out with him when I was, like, 21 years old, 20, and he was, like, the 14-year-old kid that was always around hanging out with the older dudes. You know, smoking weed with us and we would always get him high when

he was young and stuff, and be his bad influence.

You know his mom's gonna see this interview. He already got in trouble for another one.

Uh oh.
He was never really, like, a metalhead. He would just always listen to all sorts of music. And so was I, you know, even though in my teenage years I was a huge Iron Maiden fan. Like, the reason why I even decided to pick up a bass was because of the guitarist of Iron Maiden.

What's your favorite Maiden album?
Iron Maiden or *Killers*.

Yeah, I like Killers, myself.
I like the rawness of the first couple of records. But I didn't like around or after Powerslave, I didn't like it.

I always thought Paul Di-Anno was the genius and all Bruce Dickinson really had to do was come and kind of copy his creativity and put his voice on it. Even though Bruce Dickinson is an amazing vocalist ... you know, he was trained to sing opera ever since he was a kid. Paul Di'Anno was probably like the street kid that had all this influence and he was (bleep) punk rock.

More like Eddie the Mascot than anybody else.

Exactly.

(Pointing at Ahrue) Were you in Machine Head, like, in '97? When you played Ozzfest?
No. If you actually take "HM"…it would kind of be like, "Head Machine."

[The conversation then took a detour into the topic of sex and groupies, which has been edited.]

So, it's got to be hard to go through personnel changes. How did you guys weather that and what was it like when you were in the midst of it?
Um, to be honest with you man ... like, for me, it was never a thing where I hesitated; or was like, "Oh my God! What are we gonna do?" I like to think of this band sort of like, you know, you're in or you're out. It's up to you to have your heart in it. When Ahrue joined the band and Danny joined the band, their hearts had to be in it. We weren't going to be like, "Please, please, please join the band. Please be in it. Please stay." So, to me, it was just like ... kinda like a weight lifted off my shoulders. Cause I knew that those two guys were just very un-creative at that point in time and, you know, very un-friendly towards any situation. Like anything that happened they'd just be like, you know, "Whatever," they just didn't care. So to have those two guys no longer be with us and have two now that actually give a (bleep), it's like a godsend to me. Now we have two people in the band that really care, you know – like Ahrue gives a (bleep) about what we're gonna do: 'Okay, what direction are we taking? Tones, guitar playing, blah blah blah.' Danny, we still got to beat it into his head a little bit. It's a big head to beat, you know.

He's kind of a rookie, you know? Like, out of everybody that's been in the band, he's the only that's never been on tour. You know, like, when we started touring, he's never been on tour, so a lot of it's new to him.

He doesn't have a touring passport yet. He's still got a touring green card. But, you know, as far as Mark and Roger, man, we were like, "See you later dude." You know? Like, "Good luck. It's a tough business. Have fun. I don't know what to tell you." Both of those guys were struggling in music. Trying to do something positive in music, for years dude, and they weren't doing (bleep) until the day we asked them to join this band. Unlike Ahrue, who was already in the music business. And he wasn't gonna join our band just purely for the glamour. You understand what I'm saying?

Yeah.

Like, he had a choice. He was already in another band and had been in and out of it, and made records and toured the world. And, you know, Danny's still got his green card! But he's an amazing percussion player man. Amazing.

One thing that kind of made it easier on my part is that, while I was still in Machine Head, we did two different tours with Ill Nino. So, it was like, I've known all those guys and we've had a lot of fun together in the past; so, me getting in the band wasn't like them just getting somebody that they've never met before.

Yeah, like we didn't have to wait for Ahrue to be in Ill Nino to see him drunk with his pants around his ankles.

Yeah, you'd already seen me like that. Ha!

Outdoors. In the cold. At a festival. The "Pants-Around-Your-Ankles" festival.

I've heard about those.
Yeah. I have this problem sometimes when I'm too drunk. I like to take my clothes off and run around.

Sort of like the hippies do at Woodstock. We all look at it as a positive thing, man, you know?

The pants around my ankles?

Yeah, it's very positive.

We were like, 'He gets drunk and his pants come off – big deal! Danny gets drunk and he gropes chicks. It's not a problem.' I remember this day … the rest of the guys were really nervous. I was like, "Dude, don't you understand? This is our chance to finally, finally, part ways with, freakin, Lochness-Tied-To-The-Boat-In-The-Water." So, you know, it was a positive thing.

So how on earth did you guys find a way to write songs with your exhausting trip schedule, and for this latest album, especially?
Um, we didn't really do much writing on the road. You know, it's a pain in the (bleep), kind of. I mean, you can write on the road, like, sit around and do guitar and play something like that, but you can't really start putting it on page until you get home, 'till you get in the studio, with something you can record. So, for me it was, I think the starting of the writing of this record started after the break that we had off of the *Ozzfest*. At least that's when I went home and started to demo songs, and when Jardell went home and started demo-ing songs, and Laz started writing. So after last year's *Ozzfest*, I'd say. That was like July. We took a break, wrote some songs, did a European tour, then came back and wrote more songs, went into pre-production and record the record.

That was a good show, by the way. I saw you in San Antonio in the rain.
Oh wow. That was actually ... um, we weren't really supposed to be playing it. We were lucky, dude, cause, like, the two days that it rained we got to play the main stage. There's a lot of us man, and we got a lot of gear, and we were really worried about having to pay for it all over again.

Yeah. I was standing in water this deep. For Andrew W.K. Just coming down in sheets and it was like six inches, my shoes were just ruined. It was crazy.
Yeah, we weren't worried about our shoes, man. We were worried about, like, the cabinets and the amplifiers.

Uh-huh. Ozzy came out there after the audience had finally got a chance to dry off, cause they were under the roof for like two and a half hours … he comes out there and throws buckets of water on people, like usual. Ha!
I'm surprised he didn't have a hose. Usually he comes out there with a hose.

He had the water things at the top. He was just dousing people that had been rained on all day.
That's the part of the show where I use the excuse, "Hey, sweetie, could I hide under your shirt?" I can't get wet.

So what do you guys think of Jesus Christ?
He was a good man. Ha, ha. Um, wow that's an interesting question. I think that, uh, you know, if it wasn't for Jesus Christ being murdered and, perhaps, the Romans that murdered him for that whole situation … I think we'd still have public slaughters. But, what Christianity and Catholicism were supposed to be … isn't anymore. It's totally turned into a business. Not so much a business, but I don't think that people have faith because it's truly in them anymore. I think that people do it just to have a sense of security. I think for people like that – they're kind of just, like, cheating themselves. I think it's better to have no faith in religion, and live your life as a proper human being than have faith in religion and have people right there having to tell you (bleep) up (bleep).

I think, uh, I'm not a very religious person, and I don't believe in Christianity the way that the Christians do. But I think that everybody's entitled to believe what they want. I just wish that some of the Christians would think the same way, cause they try to cram their religion down everybody else's throats.

The Christianity that they have embedded in their beliefs is not what it was supposed to have been in the beginning. So, in a weird kind of way, man, you kind of think, you know, technology has changed a lot. And back in the day, they didn't have technology. You know, you couldn't go online and download porn. I wonder what the Bible would have been like if they had computers back then and they could, you know, just download porn off of the internet.

Thou shalt not download porn off the internet.

There's one story in it where King David sees Bathsheba taking a bath from his palace patio. That might be an example… Found her on the internet with a web-cam and then said, "Come to my Parlor!"
I mean if you think about it, man, the world is just as (bleep) up as it used to be. It's just that now it's not in the plain view of your eyes. Back in the day, you know, if you did something wrong they didn't send you to prison, they killed you in front of everybody. So, I don't know what to think of it man. I think that, you know, the death of Jesus Christ, perhaps, gave some people a choice to maybe live their life better – if they want to. So, in a weird, (bleep) up way I'm saying that Jesus Christ's death was a good thing.

That's a good point. I think a case could be made for his death, and whatever, making an imprint upon society that's here to this day. Civilization itself, the word civilization –
No.

People that believe in Jesus Christ's countries have public slaughters, too.

Yeah, but like I said, it's just not in the plain view of the eye. You have a choice.

I think there have been a lot more peaceful cultures than Christian cultures that were, like, destroyed because of Christian cultures.

Well, that's true they did kill a lot of Indians.

Yeah. And spreading (bleep) venereal disease and bringing all kinds of sickness and (bleep) to people that never had that.

Well, you know, like I said. At least there's an option, whereas people in these other places had no option. You were born, and you either believed what they told you to believe, or you were killed. Some Christians still feel the same way, but to me Jesus Christ was ... to me, the death of Jesus Christ was the turning point. You know, he was meant to show people that you can believe whatever you want to. Just live your lives the right way.

A lot of people probably agree with that point, about, you know, about the turning point, because of the year 2004, and the whole timing, calendar system. And this culture is based on that.
Well, I still think that the calendar's all screwed up man. Like when people celebrate New Year's, usually I'm watching my TV going, "Man, this really ain't even New Year's, what the (bleep) are they celebrating?" They're celebrating technological turnover of another 365 days. I don't get it. Sometimes like it gets all (bleep), the calendar's all screwed up and for all I know, New Year's, holidays, (bleep), manmade things will sell more (bleep). You know, like, Christmas. Why do we tell kids that Christmas is the time that Santa Claus comes? Why don't we just tell them from the beginning that it's really a religious holiday? Well, because the world wanted to make money off of it, and in Christmas time, people sell more (bleep). The more money they spend. So, there are positive points and negative points – it's all within yourself, man. God is within you. There's no big guy sitting in a chair above the clouds, you know? It's just a belief and a faith, while you're alive, cause once you're dead, will you have enough? Let me know, we'll see. If you want to know, I'm guilty of it, I mean I buy (bleep) from Santa Claus, too.

Well, if you remember, we didn't even have Santa Claus. We had, uh ... remember the black peets?

No.

Oh. It was me and Miles and uh…

Oh yeah! That's the seven, uh, saints.

Yeah. I don't know. But they're these little things called black peets that bring your presents and they cut the strings…

That's kind of cool, dude. You know, you never told me that! I want to start making up my own (bleep)! Like, it's, let's see, it's gonna be the white geese … that'll bring you the present. (bleep) it. I mean, you might as well just make up your own story. It's the pigeons.

It's Michael Jackson.

He's got the fun…
Michael Jackson! I could see it in the Enquirer. Santa Claus is Michael Jackson.

No man, people should use Michael Jackson, instead of the Boogeyman, to scare kids.

He might as well be Santa Claus, because if he gets proven guilty, he'd better move to the (bleep) north pole.

Did you see his mug shot? He had makeup on. They showed it on the news. The full-on lipstick, the eye shadow, he looks perfect. Perfect-ness, in his eyes. He went and stopped in front of a mirror and did makeup before his mugshot.
I want to know what happened to Michael Jackson. Like, I would love to just get inside his head. Get the truth within himself.

I think he was abused as a child.

Maybe it is a disease. Maybe he just really wants to be white.

It appears that way. One thing that bothers me about the whole thing is that, like, witchcraft, in the 1700s – if you accuse somebody of being a child molester, they're guilty. All you have to do is bring an accusation, and they're history. There's a stigma attached to that wicked, horrible thing, but, you just accuse somebody of that and – boom! People believe it.
Yeah. Well, like I said before, dude: Technology has changed a lot things and you can no longer just accuse somebody, you know. Now, with technology we have the new detectives on the Discovery Channel! They will prove your innocence or your guilty-ness.

In the 1700s, there's like this bread, there's this mold that grows on bread – ergo? Like ergo?

It's like lysergic acid, like LSD.
Yeah, yeah! And people would eat bread, and start trippin, like they were trippin on acid. And they'd be tried as witches when they were just (bleep) trippin. And then they'd get burned, on acid.

I always hate it on the news when they say, "So and so, accused of blah, blah, blah." And it's like, his picture's up there, he's only been accused … how's he

"I think that the death of Jesus Christ, perhaps, gave some people a choice to maybe live their life better – if they want to. So, in a weird ...way I'm saying that Jesus Christ's death was a good thing."

Yeah, but like I said before, you know, what it was meant to be it really isn't. For some people it is. There are certain people that live their life the right way and don't cause harm to others, and they try to leave something positive behind and they're not purely cheating themselves because they're afraid of death and where they're gonna go after they die. I think most people live their lives in fear of death. That's the main motivation for doing something positive. And if the main motivation for doing something positive is fear, then you've got it all wrong.

Makes sense. It's been written that Jesus claimed to be "the Way, the Truth and the Life, and that no one comes to the Father but by Me." What do you think about that?
I don't know.

I think it's different times now, man. And technology has changed a lot.

That's like … so, for somebody that's never heard of Jesus Christ, what happens to them? Like, when they die? Like, in other countries and for other religions? Are they automatically guilty for not hearing of Jesus?

Good question.
I don't usually waste my time thinking about it. I just think everyone can believe what they want to believe and I can think what I want to think.

But if you think about it, man, the countries that have no belief in Jesus Christ, have beliefs in other religions – still have public slaughters. You know what I'm saying?

Not all of them.

Most of them.

going to get his life back if he's innocent?
See, that (bleep) goes for Kobe Bryant, man. Who knows what he did? They still won't know, man.

So, how close to you guys stick to your set list? To a written piece of paper? How much do you deviate from it, go back to it? When you're playing live, how much is structure? How much is loose?
Um, usually before this actual tour that we're doing right now, we usually stick to the set list pretty tight. But on this tour we've been doing, like, hour sets when we're doing our shows, forty-five minute sets when we're doing opening shows. Thirty minute sets when we're doing radio shows. And depending upon the band that we're opening up for, we've been switching it around a lot. So this tour, in particular, we've been switching up the set list a lot. We always close with "Liar" – number six off the last record, just because we all like to close with that one, I guess. But anything under "Liar" we've been switching on this tour. Before this tour I would say we truly stuck to a pretty tight-knit set list and just stuck with it, but on this one it's been so, like, different types of shows with different kinds of bands. Like, we opened up for Puddle of Mudd last night. You know what I'm saying? We're a pretty heavy band. Like, Ill Nino supporting Puddle of Mudd is actually kind of funny. But they gave us the gig and gave us a shot and they're really cool dudes. You know, four nights before that, we opened up for Linkin Park, and five nights before that we opened up for Korn. We've been just kind of like, 'Hey, you know what? We're a pretty universal band, we can have a universal fan base. Let's just chop the set list up depending upon which show we're gonna play.' So, we've been doing that a lot on this tour. We still play the main songs that we play…

How do you do that? How do you point them in the direction of, eh, finding that feel?
A lot of times – I know for me – sometimes, something, maybe it's not you, or it's something else or something. Something happens that's really traumatic or something in your life that can happen to you that can change your whole perspective on things, and how you feel. Musically, you know?

When you say "vibe," do you mean the energy between, you know, people when they're playing together? Or, the energy just within yourself?
Uh, a little of both, and also just your playing. When it stops becoming technique and moves into "feel." Kind of, like, a band that might, uh, "Hey, let's go into this song next." You know? "Let's skip over song number three on a set."

Well, to answer that question, like, the way you just interpreted it, I would have to say, then – yes. These are the guys for everything, when it comes to the vibe. At least in the context of what you said. You know, 'Which song should we go to next?' Or, 'What should I feed off of him?' Or, you know, 'How should he feed off of Jardel?' If you don't have vibe, I think we're kind of ready to just like, dice somebody. You can't really teach them and tell them what to do. The knowledge of knowing what to do you have to have within yourself. But, uh, opening up your ears and just purely listening? Anybody can do that. You know, the rest is really up to you. And I think the vibe is within yourself. I find myself pretty lucky, cause I know the vision I had of this band when we first started is almost the exact same vision that I saw when Jardel brought in his first song that he ever wrote for this band. So, as far as like, him or Laz or even something I heard Ahrue play, it's all they had to do, I think, is listen and just play. You know the vibe is always within you. Just feel – all they have to do is just go on. I relate to that, you know? I hear the same things Ahrue does. Obviously, if we were jiving with Eddie Van Halen we would not get the same thing. We would hear, you know (random guitar noises)…

I think you're right in pointing out that "feel" is kind of an ambiguous word. Like, "vibe" is playing with feeling. Like, I can teach you Michael Schenker note for note, but somebody that's never done that or had any feeling –
You've got to do it yourself. You've got to come up with it yourself.

I always feel like we could either be playing music, or like, feeling it. When you're feeling it, it feels like you're communicating through it. Like you're actually talking to somebody through notes, not like you're just playing notes on a guitar. That's how I feel about it. That's what I feel like "feeling" is.

Kind of a cool dimension to music.
Ya, I think it's the most important thing.

What inspired you guys to fuse so many styles of music together? Specifically, like ethnic sounds, or world fusion sounds…
I think it was, like, the, um, the post-grunge thing that was going on at the time… At least me, you know, I can't necessarily get into each individual member's head. I think that it was that post grunge thing that was going on with everything – bass, drums, guitar, vocals, here you go and that's all we got. And, it was almost like no personal identity with the music. It's almost like you're really just following a genre. Like, I'm going to be punk rock, or I'm going to be metal. Or I'm gonna be traditional rock. Or I'm gonna be jazz. Hip-hop. Latin. And it was kind of like, "Well, if you're going to do this, then it's just drums, guitar and bass, and if you're going to do this, then you can add a piano, and if you're going to do this, then there's congas and stuff," but that's it. I think it was just being sick of just seeing different musical genres having different instrumentation, but only within those musical genres. I think for this band it was about taking instruments that aren't supposed to be in this type of music, and, uh, creatively making it work, you know? Something that we'd love. Something like, Peruvian music, or reggae. They use congas, and melodic configurations and you're not supposed to do that in this kind of music. I think it was just us being tired of seeing it only in certain genres. We're gonna blend it, but blend it in a smart way. Not just part for part. Like, even though I love System of a Down, they're the kind of band that's just … create this part by part. "This part is time, you know, here you go. This part is breakdown. This part is metal. And this part is nice and soft and melodic." We kind of just wanted to, like, make it one identity. Just be identifiable and always have everything going on. Like, you could probably take an accordion, and somewhere in the middle of our songs, put an accordion sound, and it would be possible if used the right way. Whereas, if you took a conga and tried to put it in a Pearl Jam song, people would have been like, "What the (bleep) are they doing?" So, it was kind of just like that. You know, being sick and tired of "all you can do is play…" No boundaries.

That's a very creative and artistic thing to do and come up with. So, I'm curious to know what some of your thoughts and philosophies about art are? What do you think the purpose of art is? What's the benefit of art?
I think art is whatever anybody wants to take from it. Like, some people will look at art and be really inspired by seeing great technique. And then some people will look at art and be really inspired by the feeling that comes across from it. So, I think it's … it gets into the individual's interpretation and what to take from it. I don't think there's any "right" message that art is supposed to give, or that music is supposed to give. It's just … the person that makes it makes it because they come up with whatever reason they want to and the person that sees it or hears it, listens to it for the reasons that they want to.

I think that art is one of those things that is almost not spoken about, but everybody has a little piece of it inside themselves. And, to me, art is kind of broken down into the five senses, you know? Like, to me, it happens to be my ears and my brain and putting words together. Like, some people that like to draw get off on the visual of art. Some people that like to touch get off on, you know, being sculptors and building something with their hands. I was a carpenter… I (bleep) hated it… I was a good carpenter, don't get me wrong – 'cause I needed to make money. But, you know, with me it was always about hearing something. I mean, that touches my soul. Listening to something… That's the way into my heart. It's not really with my eyes, it's with my hearing. I think that part is broken down into five different senses, you know? I can't be a painter, or a sculptor, cause it wouldn't touch my soul, you know? And art is meant to touch somebody – deep. Not just go, "Wow! That's a skill!" You know, it's meant to kind of, grow. You feel that? God's just like… He put together some mathematical riffs and beats like a multiplication equation, you know? Like, when I heard Eddie Van Halen shred, I was like, "Wow! Amazing!" You know? But, he's one of those guys that has the mathematical ability of putting all those notes together within a half a second and also writing songs that can touch you. So, you know, there's skill and there's art that's meant to touch you and change the way you live, and … there's art that I don't understand. To me art is supposed to touch your soul … whichever way, like ... your spirit should lead.

✖

"But, what Christianity and Catholicism were supposed to be … isn't anymore."

SYNNOVE:
The Whore and the Bride

SYNNOVE:
Synnove

MARTYRS SHRINE:
Martyrs Shrine

MORTIFICATION:
Mortification

MORTIFICATION:
Scrolls of the Megilloth

TEMPLAR:
Witch Hunt

EARLY WARNING SYSTEM:
Overworld

LIGHTFORCE:
1986 to 1989

WORLD CLASS OZ METAL

KOHLLAPSE:
Distant Mind Alternative

HORDE:
Hellig Usvart

VARIOUS:
Oz Mosh 2005

FEARSCAPE:
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be THE change.

TRIPS

We are excited to share with you, our friends, our 2009 summer trips! Come out and join us in making a difference!

LOS ANGELES
March 9th-14th
March 16th-21st
March 23rd-28th
March 30th-April 4th
April 6th-11th
We have teamed up with various organizations in the Los Angeles area so we can make a positive difference in the city! Our purpose is easy: we simply just don't want to make a difference in other countries only, we want to make a difference in our own country as well! We will be feeding the homeless, playing with children who have no friends, learning about human trafficking in the United States, as well as so many other important activities! At the end of the week, we will enjoy a fun adventure together as a group to celebrate all we've done!

UKRAINE
May 22nd - June 1st
$3000 (payment due on May 1st)
We will be learning about Human Trafficking in Europe and how poverty is the leading cause. Also, we will work at an orphanage to develop relationships with the beautiful Ukrainian culture. This trip promises to be an amazing time! We are asking that you have graduated high school to accompany us on this trip.

GUATEMALA
June 12th-20th
June 19th - 27th
$2000 (payment due on May 1st)
In Guatemala we will once again learn about the Fair Wage practices of the coffee industry, especially in the Guatemalan culture. This trip is being repeated because of the fantastic time we had this past June. Come experience what life is like in Central America! We are asking that you have graduated high school to accompany us on this trip.

NEW YORK CITY
July 13th - 18th
July 20th - 25th
July 27th - August 1st
$800 (payment due on May 1st)
This trip is open to all high school students and up! Once again, we would like to make a difference in our own country, just like we are making a difference in other parts of the world. We are traveling to Los Angeles over Spring Break and we are also excited to say that we are traveling to New York City over the summer! Come work with us to be the change right here in the United States!

CORNERSTONE ILLINOIS
FACELESS INTERNATIONAL FUNDRAISER BIKE TOUR
June 17th - June 29th
Starting on June 17th, and leaving from Atlanta, GA, we will be raising awareness about Fair Wage and Human Trafficking by biking our way to the Cornerstone Music Festival! This promises to be an exciting time! We are working on all of the details still, but email Valarie at valarie@facelessinternational.com to get the latest details! We are so stoked about this!!!

We would love to meet you on one of these trips! To receive more information about any these opportunities, email Sarah at sarah@facelessinternational.com

Album reviews

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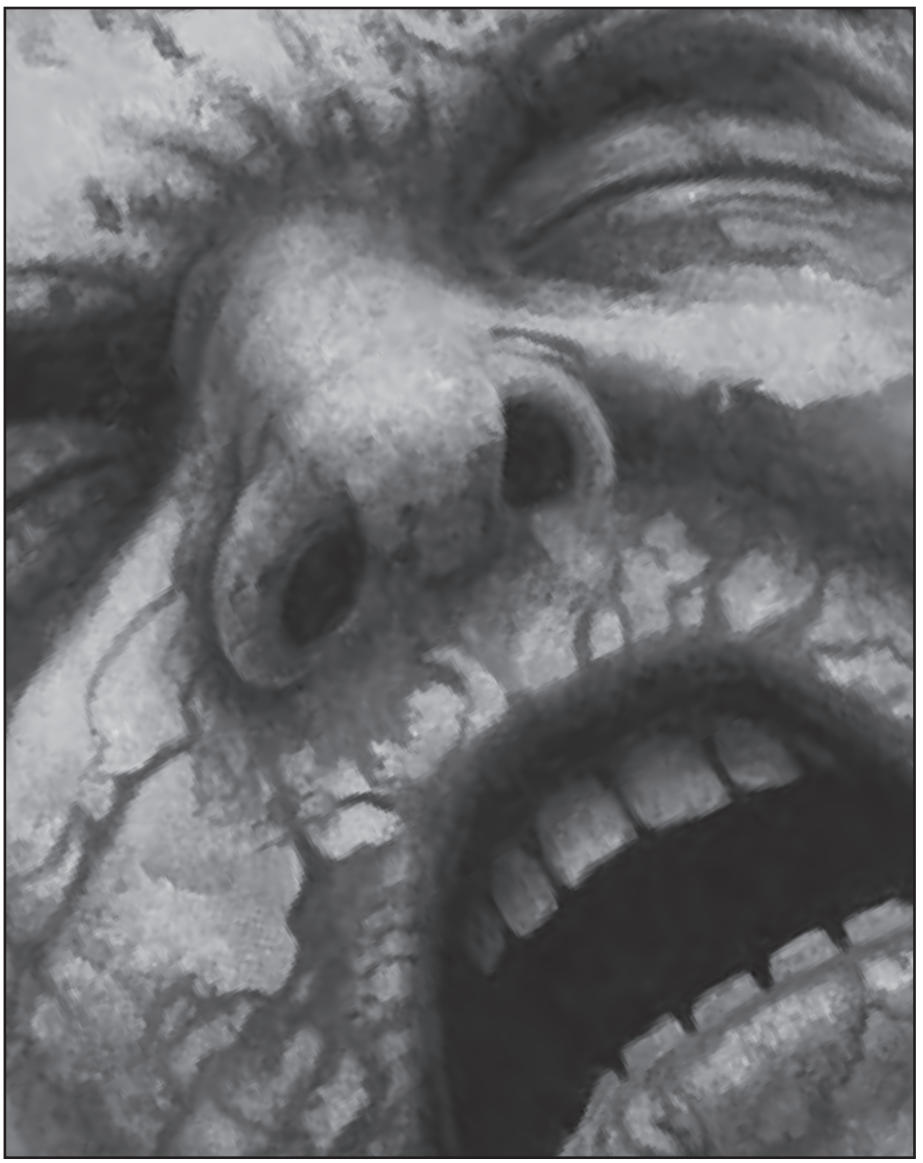


BECOMING THE ARCHETYPE

DICHOTOMY

The best piece of advice I can give you about this record is to listen to it at least twice. When I first popped it in, I listened to it all the way through and wasn't overly impressed. Some breakdown chants, metal guitars, some extra instrumentation dropped in here and there to spice things up. Seemed like a typical metal record. But after the second listen, the third, fourth times... the record became more and more incredible.

Dichotomy is Becoming the Archetype's third album, their latest in over a year and a half since *The Physics of Fire*. Having made a solid splash in the metal world over the past two years, touring all over the place, their highly anticipated *Dichotomy* left the public with high expectations. After I got a chance to listen to the future of BTA, I was totally on the fence the first time I heard *Dichotomy*, having expected a lot. But each time it plays, the better it gets.

The band has dropped all sorts of incredible instrumentation throughout the record: there's piano, flamenco guitar, even some harpsichord – all well done, too. Whereas it could become schticky to just use other instruments in an attempt to expand a band's horizons, they do an incredible job of putting the pieces together, crafting intelligent songs.

"Deep Heaven Dichotomy" throws in a sweet piano riff over a drum machine before moving back into classic metal. The song "St. Anne's Lullaby" is definitely a lullaby, an amazing composition of flamenco guitar to give you a breath of fresh air. Towards the end of "Artificial Immortality," they bring the synth strings over crowd noise to pull an amazing effect that will get you all kinds of riled up. Some harpsichord at the beginning of "Ransom." Their instrumentation is all over the place – and it actually helps the record out – and their songwriting is top notch.

They still pull some metal clichés, but that's to be expected. With what they've done around the clichés, you'd have no problem recommending the record to your friends. ~~[SOLID STATE] DAVID STAGG~~

Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

SKILLET

COMATOSE COMES ALIVE

Not too long ago, right about the time I received the assignment for this very review, I found myself in a situation where I was backstage at a Skillet show. I bring this up for two reasons. 1) It was a serendipitous occasion giving me the unusual chance to compare the live performance of a band with the recently released live album. And, 2) I was asked to leave the stage area because of risk of explosions. Number two speaks to what, I think, has always been Skillet's best attribute – the live show. They consistently bring nothing less than a ROCK SHOW, regardless of the size of crowd or the enthusiasm shown. It is, in a word, respectable. That they brought pyro with them (something I haven't seen in person since James Hetfield nearly blew his arm off in '92) just drives the point home. But the question remains. Does the record do the live show justice? Yes and no. The album sounds good – guitars and bass are tight and appropriately bowel shaking in their riffage. Drums, provided by newest lady-phenom Jen Ledger, are awesome, and the addition of a violinist and cellist add a dose of drama and flair. But it suffers from the same problem that many live records have, which is the sense of alienation one feels when listening to it. There is lots of "Hey Chattanooga! ARE YOU READY TO ROCK!!!" type stuff, which, as a listener in Texas, does nothing for me. I'm left out simply because I was never a part of it to begin with. The band preempts this by including a live DVD (production value = high), which helps considerably. Having a visual does wonders for when you want to rock the album in your car, and it's ultimately the greatest selling point for the record. It's all good, but nothing beats seeing that pyro in person… ~~[ATLANTIC/ARDENT/INO] MIKE HOGAN~~

RED

INNOCENCE AND INSTINCT

You have to give respect to any band who sticks to their guns. For Red, they have found the formula that works for them, even if their brand of Nu Metal, as defined by their wildly successful debut *End of Silence* (2006, Essential) is not necessarily fashionable anymore. Then again, this sound has sold truckloads of records for bands like Chevelle, Linkin Park, Breaking Benjamin, Pillar, TFK, and on and on and on recently. So, who really cares about "cool?" It's tough enough to even survive it as a band these days, so if you find something that connects with the fickle buying audience, then you must continue on that road. On *Innocence and Instinct*, Red just writes mid-tempo, riff-heavy, catchy rock songs, along with co-writer/producer Rob Graves. And they do it well, over and over again. If you liked the last record, you should like this one, though it plays like one long song for the most part. And they lack the massive single, a la "Breathe into Me," from their debut. Regardless, this is a solid midwest-rock record from front to back. There are a few notable moments here to break up the dirge, particularly track 5, "Never Be The Same," which features an acoustic intro (rather than strings, which is the chosen intro for most of the tracks) and a cover of Duran Duran's "Ordinary World," where vocalist Michael Barnes shows some very shrewd vocal prowess. Overall, this is a safe follow-up that should keep the ball rolling for Red. ~~[ESSENTIAL] ANDREW SCHWAB~~

THE ALMOST

NO GIFT TO BRING

The Almost is no longer just Underoath's drummer Aaron Gillespie's side project (perhaps it never was). The band has evolved into a full-fleshed entity focused on pulsating melodic rock, which was delivered so well on the debut album, *Southern Weather*. However, on their follow-up, the Christmas themed EP, entitled *No Gift To Bring*, the band turns 180 degrees. Original opening track "Awful Direction" unveils suppressed Southern roots as an impressible impersonation of Ryan Adams. The cover of holiday hit "Little Drummer Boy" features Gillespie's searing soprano voice – which, combined with the ever-present acoustic guitar, hints towards Dashboard Confessional a la *The Places You Have Come To Fear The Most*. The other tracks follow suit except for the final, which is a glitch-pop remix of "Dirty And Left Out" courtesy of Underoath guitarist Tim McTague, who also produced the entire EP. This release only helps prove true that sometimes it's wise for musicians hidden behind screaming lead vocalists to branch out if compelled so. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] DAN FRAZIER~~

THRICE

LIVE AT THE HOUSE OF BLUES

Dustin Kensrue, in his plain plaid shirt, doesn't give the impression of being a rock star. Yet in concert, this Thrice leader displays an undeniably commanding presence. Whether he's gruffly belting out rockers, like "Firebreather," or quieting down the tone considerably, home viewers (and listeners to this one DVD, two CD set) will often hear voices of devoted fans singing along. Captured at Anaheim House of Blues, the center of the band's Orange County, CA, home, this package sports a healthy 25-track helping of this band's catalogue to date. This DVD opens with "The Lion & The Wolf," off the group's most recent *Alchemy Index, Vols. 3 & 4: Air and Earth*, and closes with "The Earth Will Shake," from 2005's *Vheissu*. There is little visual spectacle in a Thrice performance, but if you appreciate tangible and sincere rock passion, *Thrice Live at the House of Blues* simply delivers the goods. ~~[VAGRANT] DAN MACINTOSH~~

DENISON WITMER

CARRY THE WEIGHT

"Life Before Aesthetics," off Denison Witmer's new *Carry The Weight* CD, opens with, "I've got more important things than shiny diamond rings and modern furniture." If you've arrived at listening to Witmer hoping to hear a bunch of braggadocio about his bling, you've obviously come to the wrong place. But if you enjoy quiet and thoughtful meditations on life and how to live it, pull up a chair and stay awhile. This set ranges from observational songs, exemplified by "Beautiful Boys and Girls" and "Catholic Girl," to more introspective works, such as "If You Are The Writer." And throughout, Witmer serenades with a calming vocal tone over picked acoustic guitar and un-abrasive keyboards. Ironically, the disc's title track appears a second time labeled "acoustic," as though Witmer's music can get even quieter. If he ever did an unplugged show, would we even hear him at all? Heaven forbid! ~~[THE MILITIA GROUP] DAN MACINTOSH~~

THE BECOMING

VOL. I

Though it's not the most impressive debut album to emerge from Tooth & Nail's roster (that distinction probably belongs to Emery, NJ, FSF, Strongarm, or Stavesacre), *Vol. I* is certainly the promise of potential greatness to come. Mixing equal parts attitude and low, brooding vocals atop slow 'n' tight grooves, The Becoming comes off like an American version of HIM or a simpler, less metallic Demon Hunter. "Silent As The Grave" hums along at a mid-tempo pace that would hypnotize the body into submission while the infectious chorus hooks its way into that part of the brain that forces singing along. A few songs depart from this strong identity, like "The Night That Has No Morning," where the point/counter-point combination vocals (of guitarist Dustinn Lowry and frontman Caleb Owens) or the big choruses of "Heaven Isn't So Far" would fit well right alongside any flavor-of-the-month emo band. Don't count this against The Becoming, though, because it seems anything they touch turns out heavy, thick, and memorable. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] DOUG VAN PELT~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Becoming The Archetype *Dichotomy*	04	04
Skillet *Comatose Comes Alive*	04	04
Red *Innocence And Instinct*	03*	03
The Almost *No Gift To Bring*	04	03*
Thrice *Live At The House Of Blues*	04	03
Denison Witmer *Carry The Weight*	03*	03
The Becoming *Vol. I*	04	
Brave Saint Saturn *Anti-Meridian*	03	03
The Apprentice *S/T*	03	04
Newsboys *Houston We Are A Go*	03*	03
Abandon *Searchlights*	03*	03
Hand To Hand *Breaking The Surface*	03	03
Danielson *Trying Hartz*	03	03
Through Solace The Stand	04	04
In Fear And Faith *Your World On Fire*	03*	03*
Anathallo *Canopy Glow*	04	05

BRAVE SAINT SATURN
ANTI-MERIDIAN

As we meet up again with the musical space crew Brave Saint Saturn, the planet has entered "a new era in history, that of the anti-matter age, as researchers begin to harness a new means of powering larger, faster spacecrafts, while solving the energy problems that have plagued mankind for centuries." Or so say the liner notes to *Anti-Meridian*, this group's third full-length. But after one astronaut cries, "I wanna go home / I want my baby back" during "Here Is The News," it's clear not all is hunky-dory – in a particularly Space Oddity way – out there in outer space. Naturally, much of this keyboard-oriented rock is of the sci-fi lyrical variety. But "Underground," which speaks of how "choreography never replaced conviction," is a reminder that sincere music of faith is often found just below the mainstream's surface. Once again, Brave Saint Saturn ventures where few others have dared to go. ~~[DEPT. OF BIOPHYSICS] DAN MACINTOSH~~

THE APPRENTICE
S/T

This is an autumn evening walk down a multi-colored tree-canopy-trail where the leaves that have already fallen cushion your feet and you can walk in solace. It's the nights you go to the Christmas tree lot and the attendants give you hot chocolate and popcorn. You know what I'm saying? Something about DeLong's vocals, honey-sweet composition and creative melancholy taps at those feelings. Maybe it's the singing harmonica. Maybe the soft acoustic and the fact that the drumbeats aren't your normal, boring, kick-snare, kick-snare. Maybe it's the ability to capture the essence of "I don't know where I'm going down this road, all I know is my sweet Lord will carry me home" ("This Road") – and take you to that vulnerable place. "Adeline" says it best: "So fragile, so flawless, and so fair." ~~[FUTURE DESTINATION] LEVI MACALLISTER~~

NEWSBOYS
HOUSTON WE ARE A GO

When you first heard *Not Ashamed*, did you really think that 14 albums later, the Newsboys would still be rocking arenas around the globe? Me neither. Yet here they are on *Houston We Are Go*, singing to almost 9,000 Houstonians on the recent *Go Tour* and showing the impressive live side of the Australian act. *Houston* features many of the Newsboys' staples like "Shine," "Breakfast," and "Entertaining Angels," although the most entertaining part is a brief history of the band during a special medley including "Not Ashamed" and "Love Liberty Disco." An interesting inclusion is Matt Redman's "Blessed Be Your Name," considering the Aussies have plenty of their own material fans would want to hear. Still, it continues the worshipful theme already laid out with "I Am Free" and "He Reigns." All in all, it's a powerful performance showing an all-ages crowd singing along to every tune and a band that's not close to stopping. ~~[INPOP] MATT CONNER~~

ABANDON
SEARCHLIGHTS

Featuring the same five songs from the band's summer self-titled EP, Abandon now hit shelves with their debut full-length, *Searchlights*. For the most part, it's an impressive first impression and, from what I've been told, that's the important one. "Give Me Love" enters Needtobreathe or Starfield territory with large pop/rock hooks and a yearning vocal delivery from vocalist Josh Engler, who sounds like Kevin Max without the vibrato. "Atmosphere" evokes Mute Math without the musicianship, although that's not necessarily a knock on Abandon as much as a testament to just how brilliant Mute Math is. "Hold On" seems like Seabird traded the piano for electric guitars. For most people, these are all solid comparisons, so Abandon should slide right into place on our iPods quite nicely. ~~[FOREFRONT] MATT CONNER~~

HAND TO HAND
BREAKING THE SURFACE

Enthusiasm and energy, Hand to Hand is 'breaking the surface' with well-crafted dynamics and lyrics (like those in 'Bullets for Teeth'): "…this is a revolution, somehow we'll make it through, we have the strength to fight for our lives." The theme throughout is of upbeat screamo with some great sing-songy parts, which complement the strong, clean vocals and more experimental hardcore aspects that mesh with the raw screams. They are able to take a tight double kick and incorporate it with some catchy "One last chance to breath again..." gang vocals and have it all blend smoothly. This EP is definitely going to get the crowd pumped up for future full-length releases. ~~[LIFEFORCE] LAUREL ERICKSON~~

DANIELSON
TRYING HARTZ

It's impossible to grade Daniel Smith's recordings. It's even hard for some to listen to them. Of course, Danielson, Smith's musical moniker, certainly lays plenty of "Keep Out" signs in the form of over-the-top costumes (the familiar human tree serves as the most popular example), a ridiculous tenor falsetto and beyond quirky instrumentation and song structures. Yet for all those obstacles, there's a reason Danielson holds the attention that he does. The space rock of "Body English," the darker acoustic vs. piano turns on "The Wheel Made Man," the lonely bluegrass foundation of "A No No," the '70s songwriter feel of "Jersey Loverboy"… all the tracks on *Trying Hartz* are forced to deal with the same traps the audience does, yet they work around them quite well. Somehow Smith's voice simply works with the material given. The dominant spiritual tone and feel enables – even empowers – Danielson to move forward boldly into downright creepy musical terrain. For those unfamiliar, this new two-disc *Trying Hartz* serves as a great retrospective primer if *Ships* is your only Danielson-branded compass. ~~[SECRETLY CANADIAN] MATT CONNER~~

THROUGH SOLACE
THE STAND

"Solace," as our dear Webster would have it, is defined as "finding comfort in mourning," so when you pop in *The Stand* and hear some sad clown emo-toned guitar picks sizzled in with run-of-the-mill bluesy drumbeats, it's kind of like "Well, what did you expect?" But you didn't expect this. As if to completely obliterate poor first impressions, Luke Nichols explodes with this out-of-nowhere throat-bleed vocal madness and the rest of the quintet follows suit. Chunky, breakbeat composition, shreds, and are those China Symbols I hear in there ("Passenger")? Pleas for someone to "Show us who we are and where we're going" offer relation in our hearts as much as the relentless bass does beating in our chests. This band may express deep emotion through solace, but it's done far from the lips of a sad clown, and it's anything but run-of-the-mill. ~~[HOLDFAST] LEVI MACALLISTER~~

IN FEAR AND FAITH
YOUR WORLD ON FIRE

This six-man crew has set sail a combination of a maritime (pirate) concept and screamo / hardcore / experimental style in *Your World On Fire*. The screaming and melodic vocals fit tightly together and just as well with the rapid-fire drums, tremolo picking, and synthesizer. Each intense song cohesively unifies this album with an overall epic sound; not including the unexpected yet amusing bonus track – a rendition of "Gangsta's Paradise." *Your World On Fire* doesn't leave us shipwrecked. ~~[RISE] JENN SMITH~~

ANATHALLO
CANOPY GLOW

Anathallo's namesake literally means "to renew" and 'tis exactly the outcome after listening to the collective's second album, *Canopy Glow*. Founder Matthew Joynt and the six other brilliant musicians that make up the Chicago-based act have crafted one of 2008's most memorable and, dare I say it, important albums. From the sleepy, sparkling refrains of "Northern Lights" to the haunting layered harmonies of "Tower of Babel," Canopy Glow displays a piercing and enlightening lyricism buried amidst inventive art-pop that proves the stunning *Floating World* wasn't a fluke. Instead, a new contract with Anticon provides a home for the sojourners to give us continual gifts like this one. And we're renewed once again with *Canopy Glow*. ~~[ANTICON] MATT CONNER~~

RUTH
ANORAK

Washington's Ruth claims that their moniker is not an egotistic reference to singer/guitarist Dustin Ruth's surname, but is instead a faith-based acronym for "Return Us To Him." This claim proves believable with their sophomore release entitled *Anorak*. The album packs pop rock lacquered with uplifting melodies that only a solid collaborative rock band could conjure. And with the help of mentoring musicians acting as producers (such as Aaron Sprinkle of Fair and Chris Keene of Surrogate) the songs reek of a genuine enthusiasm to create timeless music filled with dreams and hope. The defunct Watashi Wa and Ben Gibbard should be smiling somewhere. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] DAN FRAZIER~~

NEAL MORSE
LIFELINE

Is there such a thing as soul candy? If so, then surely Neal Morse is guilty of creating such a wholesome indulgence. If not, he is clearly guilty of creating prog rock ear candy second to none. After the lyrically unsettling and stoically structured *Sola Scriptura*, Neal and friends return with an absolutely heartwarming, spiritually uplifting collection of songs that will both challenge and encourage believers and non-believers alike. You can't help but connect with the redemptive nature of the title track – a song which musically encompasses Neal's passion to honor the prog rock giants of the past. Or how can you not connect with the "common man" struggle for direction in "The Way Home?" And while many will enjoy the return here to a song-oriented approach, Neal doesn't forsake his epic story-telling tendencies completely. "So Many Roads" is easily one his most engrossing sagas – both musically and lyrically – to date, as it touches the soul of anyone who cares about what they do everyday. "So many roads to nowhere … show me the way of the believer." Amen! ~~[RADIANT] JONATHAN SWANK~~

MICHAEL GUNGOR BAND
ANCIENT SKIES

It's now even cliché to call praise and worship music a crowded genre. While there are dozens of specific P&W artists, it also seems every other musician or band has created their own worship disc to fill out their catalog – much like making a Christmas record. Yet it's rare to find an artist stepping so confidently forward into such occupied territory as Michael Gungor and his band from Denver, Colorado. *Ancient Skies* is the debut on Brash Records after a successful, independent album – *All I Need is Here* – placed the band on the maps of many labels. "Giving It All" rides a straightforward pop anthem while espousing lyrics of abandonment to the kingdom of God. "Ancient Skies" is the most beautiful track since "God of Wonders" to describe the wonder and awe of creation and the Creator. "Glory is Here" is a lovely seven minute track that descends into a soft piano. All things considered, the talent and lyricism of Gungor & Co. lend a refreshing hand to a somewhat stale shelf of choices. ~~[BRASH] MATT CONNER~~

CONFIDE
SHOUT THE TRUTH

Showing no signs of stopping, the (whatever)-core scene continues its march into pop culture. The trouble with the influx of so many new bands in this genre, more so than most, is that it's getting tougher to separate the wheat from the chaff, so to speak. What makes something awesome, rather than just, say, awesomely heavy? *Shout the Truth*, the new release from California natives (and one Brit expat) Confide is, put simply, heavy. Like, *really* heavy. Every guitar chug feels like it has the weight of the world on it, and there are a lot of chugs on the album. It's singular and sort of exhausting in its scope. The vocals, when screamed, are hopeful (The Refused-esque), but when sung are slightly underwhelming. That said, it has an unquantifiable charm that's hard to dismiss. It's not blow-your-head-off-awesome, but it's not *not* awesome, either. And it shows something that many debuts don't – a ton of potential. ~~[SCIENCE] MIKE HOGAN~~

DEMON HUNTER
45 DAYS

Demon Hunter usually takes the road less traveled. Whether it be using pseudonyms on their debut album, the dark and extensive photography layout for *The Summer Of Darkness*, creating three different album covers for *The Triptych*, or producing a *Deluxe Fan Edition* of *Storm The Gates Of Hell* packed full of goodies, the band usually outdoes themselves. *45 Days* continues this tradition. The group stumbled upon up-and-coming filmmaker Cale Glendening, whom they enlisted to follow their every move during this past summer's tour. Shot in black and white, Glendening's vision is innovative, remarkable, and chock full of footage. From fan stories of a mother turning her kids on to Demon Hunter, to a soldier in Afghanistan finding encouragement through the band in a time of war, to the untimely deaths of dedicated fans, the DVD is nearly more about the fans than the band. The second DVD features a full color, professionally shot live show from Nashville. The performance is spot-on, Ryan Clark's melodic vocals shining here better than they have on pre-existing live footage. The film's score is included as a separate CD where the band gets to show their little known influences like Johnny Cash, Radiohead, and various piano and synth driven elements. It also features an acoustic version of "Fading Away" and a piano adaptation of "Carry Me Down." For the price of a regular album, this package is a steal. ~~[SOLID STATE] CHAD OLSON~~

COLD WAR KIDS
LOYALTY TO LOYALTY

The piano turns, the tribal rhythms, the gritty indie sound – every bit of it works here. *Loyalty to Loyalty* is the second studio LP of Downtown Records' Cold War Kids and it's as good as any sophomore album in recent memory. There remains a cold calculation and sterility amid the dusty, even dirty, environment created on *Loyalty*. The minimalist guitar tones carrying "Every Man I Fall For" serve as the perfect example of the album's distant feelings – a band with a bird's eye view overlooking all they set out to do. If it's dirty, in other words, it's dirty on purpose – not because CWK went into the studio to mess around. Thus, all sides – both ugly and beautiful – provide wonderful returns for the listener willing to invest enough time to take *Loyalty to Loyalty* in. ~~[DOWNTOWN] MATT CONNER~~

HOPE FOR THE DYING
S/T

As pointed out in last issue's "Pick of the Litter" section, this young band is headed for bigger things. Enter the "farm league" sub-label branch of Facedown Records, who re-mastered and re-released this gem to a public that should brace themselves for a metal slap upside the head. While not breaking much ground in the metal/hardcore/metalcore realm of music, fans of As I Lay Dying will appreciate the classic metal guitar shredding in almost every available space by James Houseman and Jack Daniels. With the band sounding this good and this prepared at this stage, these seven songs offer quite the promise for the future. ~~[STRIKE FIRST] DOUG VAN PELT~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Ruth *Anorak*	03*	04
Neal Morse *Lifeline*	03*	04
Michael Gungor Band *Ancient Skies*	04	04
Confide *Shout The Truth*	03	04
Demon Hunter *45 Days*	03*	03*
Cold War Kids *Loyalty To Loyalty*	03*	04
Hope For The Dying *S/T*	03	
Switchfoot *The Best Yet*	04	
Johnny Cash *Johnny Cash's America*	03	
Driver *Sons Of Thunder*	04	
Mirror Of Deadfaces *Lamentation*	03*	
Various Artists *Awake My Soul: The Original Soundtrack*	04	05
Amaseffer *Slaves For Life*	03	03*
Winter's Dawn *Wandering Through The Realm Of Frosted...*	03	
The Devil Wears Prada *Plagues*	04	
This Or The Apocalypse *Monument*	03*	04*

SWITCHFOOT
THE BEST YET
Hopefully, this collection is aptly titled, as it'd be a shame to shut this hit-making machine down, as they seem to still be in their artistic prime. As best-of collections go, there will always be arguing (like, why did they leave off "Amateur Lovers?"), but culling from each of the band's studio albums showed back catalog smarts and savvy. Besides grabbing a tune from the *Narnia/Caspian* soundtrack, newcomers will be introduced to *Chin*, *Learning*, and *Human*... As a cohesive, sit-down listen, it plays well. [COLUMBIA/LEGACY] DOUG VAN PELT

JOHNNY CASH
JOHNNY CASH'S AMERICA
If you've collected many a best-of album by this beloved artist, the track listing won't be what draws you to this compilation (though previously unreleased tracks like "Come Along And Ride This Train" are good'uns). Nope, this CD has many of the hits you'd expect (and already own). It's the DVD included that's the real treat here. It includes a fresh new 90-minute documentary on the man in black, where many luminaries chime in on his priceless contribution to American music. [COLUMBIA/LEGACY] DOUG VAN PELT

DRIVER
SONS OF THUNDER
Remember that opening scene in the movie *Rock Star*, where Chris Cole (Mark Wahlberg) stopped practice in mid-song and scolded his guitar player for not playing the song accurately and true to the original? The guitarist had failed to execute a bent-note accent that made all the difference to Cole. Sometimes it's the energy that wins out over perfect execution. This long-awaited re-issue is a case in point. Five of these songs were originally recorded as a cassette demo for this talented group (with guitarist Roy Z, partnering with vocalist Rob Rock and a strong support cast) to shop to labels. At some point in time the songs were touched up. The result is, like the remastered version of the great *Yellow & Black Attack* EP, sonically more polished, but has lost a punch and edge that the original captured. Having said that, this re-issued album is still a gem from the melodic metal world, sharing outstanding songs like "I'm A Warrior," "Hearts On Fire," "Only Love Can Save Me Now" and "I Believe In Love." If you'd never heard the originals, you'd never know that this wasn't some of the best metal ever. [METAL HEAVEN] DOUG VAN PELT

MIRROR OF DEADFACES
LAMENTATION
This newcomer from Riverside, CA, explains that their band name reflects humanity: "We as a whole make up one evil schizo-psycho killer." It should come as no surprise, then, that this quintet cranks out some brutal metal tunes with a blunt approach to sharing truth. Drummer Sam Perez performs like a passionate virtuoso with something to prove, while Jake Foust and Geoff Broullette stay in sync with lightning quick runs and scales that seem to be participating in races that always end in dead-on ties. Vocalist Ryan Thor bears an appropriate name, as his authoritative screams and howls convey strength yet vocal dexterity. "This Is My Curse," with its sad lyrics of guilt, is especially satisfying musically; as is the powerful riffing in "Gauntlet of the Will." Judging by these songs alone, it seems the band works best when it's angry; though "Bringer of Peace, The Lord of War" seems to end the album on a high note, with a beautiful instrumental taking over at the end to conclude the album. [CREATOR - DESTRUCTOR] DOUG VAN PELT

VARIOUS ARTISTS
AWAKE MY SOUL:
THE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK
First disc of this two'fer: 24 songs from a documentary about Sacred Harp singing, the a capella, congregationally sung hymnody that gave Southern Gospel its shape note singing. But the precedent music to that heard now by slick-haired and -suited quartets is really pretty heavy for being only vocals, with a wider emotional range than so much praise & worship chorus repertoire nowadays. Thank Luxury guitarist Matt Hinton and wife Erica for being enough into the renaissance of Sacred Harp to make the movie and record these lungbusting choisters in Georgia and Alabama. Second disc comprises rootsy rockers and folkies putting their own spins on 20 more numbers from the SH psalter. Among the thrills of hearing Third Day's Mac Powell at his rawest, Woven Hand foreboding with ominous dolor and Danielson being catchily quirky, Led Zepplin's John Paul Jones teams with Rayna Gilbert of distaff bluegrassers Uncle Earl for one of the set's more Celtic entries. Richard Buckner's singing of the shape notes before hitting the lyrics proper and Doc Watson's firsthand remembrances of SH singing number among the collection's other memorable moments. [AWAKE] JAMIE LEE RAKE

AMASEFFER
SLAVES FOR LIFE
What took Jewish musicians so long to get into religious metal? I could be wrong about the motivation or affiliation, so forgive me the assumption; but this here's an epic concept album based on the biblical exodus out of Egypt. It's quite grandiose at times, culling some of the Middle Eastern droning pitch and lush crescendos to paint a vivid, aural picture, borrowing style from Dio-era Rainbow ("Gates of Babylon") mid-life Zeppelin ("Kashmir"), melodic vocal phrasing a la Dream Theater (any album), and contrasting dynamics like those found in Queensryche's *Operation Mindcrime*. With a decidedly Torah-shaped lense, it is to their credit as songwriters that they didn't try to cover too much narrative ground. It begins with the anguish of enslavement and ends with the bittersweet freedom that is won with great loss of life. With several long songs (three clock in at over 11-minutes!), it's not for the faint of heart (or casual listen), but instead an eloquent and full feast for the patient prog rock fan. [INSIDE OUT/SPV] KERN COUNTY KID, THE

WINTER'S DAWN
WANDERING THROUGH
THE REALM OF FROSTED BEAUTY
Black metal can be a thing of great beauty and sweeping dynamics for the trained ear. Beyond the shrill vocals, the thin production and sometimes audible hiss of analog tape, there are complex and swiftly moving rhythms that the guitarist strums out like a conductor leading the way for a banging head to follow. Learning the ebb and flow of the song and becoming familiar with the vocal phrasing of the vocalist, it is even possible to decipher the message without a lyric sheet in hand. The classic albums in this genre, which in the Christian metal realm would include the Horde project and the first couple of Antestor albums, are a far cry from accessible. This two-man project gets the job done admirably, its rough, twisted sonics rake the listener over several sharp edges that are balanced by hard, stocatto guitars and blasting drums that create a calm with their fury. Ironically, the themes of winter, separation and forgiveness are explored through the metaphor of a journey, which ends in "rapturous surrender" to "the God Who loves me still." [NOKTERNAL HEMIZPHEAR] DOUG VAN PELT

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA
PLAGUES
With killer new artwork that treats dragon scales almost like stained glass, one of 2007's heaviest albums gets repackaged with a DVD that gets the viewer up close and personal as it follows the band on a couple long tours. Like the Project 86 DVD that came out in 2005, this glimpse into the on and off stage life of these six frenzied musicians kinda make one appreciate them all the more. [RISE] DOUG VAN PELT

THIS OR THE APOCALYPSE
MONUMENTS
Monuments is good listening, plain and simple. The album is gritty – and in the best way possible. Not so watered down as to detract from the energy, and not so under-produced as to negate the quality. From the second "No Horizons" screams its way into your ears like a blow to the head, you've already gotten that scrunched up "rock face" and don't realize your involvement in the chaos until the conclusion, when you find yourself with a sore neck. Lyrically affluent, vocalist Rick Armenillo showcases not only a powerful voice to hold par with sonic brutality, but talented songwriting with a depth, offering relation to anyone familiar with the human condition (which should, eh, hopefully, be all of us?). With beautifully artistic discography and a promising up-and-coming band, This or the Apocalypse has potential to be the next big thing. [LIFEFORCE] LEVI MACALLISTER

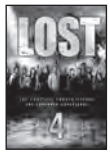
Entertainment reviews
DVDS, BOOKS & GADGETS

01 EXPELLED
VIVENDI ENTERTAINMENT

Ben Stein does a dandy job asking a question so many times and from so many angles that it begs a reasonable doubt that he could be onto something. While not as heavy-handed as his more liberal-minded predecessor, Michael Moore, he is able to interject lots of humor and professionally-done graphics and other cinematographer tricks to make a documentary anything but dull.

His tie-in with Nazi Germany and its brain-washing tactics of an atheist intelligencia elite is a powerful punch to make against the evolution-only crowd if purporting to be unbiased; but it still goes a long way for allowing the viewer to make up their own mind. I have to admit, I am on the side for supporting the idea of giving equal time to "Intelligent Design" as a theory in classrooms and/or at least in the scientific debate. It's interesting how the ugly topic of eugenics and its ties to a racist Planned Parenthood are touched on in passing, which if not disproved should cause some serious discomfort for the pro-choice crowd.

By following the principles of fair debate, this film scores big in its unflinching claim that censorship is happening in academic circles in regards to thoughts, ideas, and written/spoken words that bring into question Darwin's theory of evolution. Just as no one in high school likes being ostracized for looking or thinking different, so will the underdogs on the side of the evolution debate appreciate how comedian actor Ben Stein has fought back. *Doug Van Pelt*



02 LOST: THE COMPLETE FOURTH SEASON *BVHE*
As strange and spiritually intriguing as *Season 3* was, *4* upped the ante with flash-forwards and the new twists that fresh characters brought in. The hope of rescue, which is then yanked away by painting that future as flawed, brings great tension. This collection includes a seamless transition from pre- to post-Writer's Strike material. *DV*

03 JFK: ULTIMATE COLLECTOR'S EDITION *WARNER BROS.*
Besides the exciting original (two-disc with 17 add'l minutes) film, a third disc with the documentary, *The Kennedys: America's Emerald Kings*, is included, offering more sparkling affection for this assassinated president. The reproduced notes, photos and other memorabilia make this package quite nostalgic. *DV*

04 INDIANA JONES ... THE CRYSTAL SKULL *PARAMOUNT*
Spielberg and Lucas teamed back up and resurrected this classic series and ... did anyone really think that it would suck? Another fantastic journey was had, which touched on nuclear weapons, inter-dimensional travel, and even the consequences of premarital sex. The extras on the bonus disc are quite nostalgic. *DV*

05 THE CASE FOR FAITH *LIONSGATE*
Lee Strobel's book of the same name is given a profound yet "seeker-friendly" documentary treatment here. Taking on very real intellectual issues of suffering, the existence of evil, and the exclusive claims of Christ, the interview subjects and narrator face these questions head on, but also discuss practical ways for believers to live. *DV*

06 SAVING GOD *ECHO BRIDGE*
"Yo, you're a pastor. You're supposed to be nice," the young gangsta tells the Ving Rhames character (Armstrong Cane). "I am nice. I'm just real short on foolishness." Without getting simplistic, this movie dramatically portrayed a realistic story of redemption (with a surprise or two) in an inner city. *DV*

07 TROPIC THUNDER *DREAMWORKS*
Man is depraved. Sometimes it comes out in our humor ... and, for guys, who appreciate slapstick and extreme insanity, this movie is full of it. One example is the literal blood and guts that come spilling out of wounded soldier, Sandusky (Jay Baruchel), in battle. And cameos by McConaughey and Cruise rule... *DV*

08 CHAPTER 27 *GENIUS ENTERTAINMENT*
Waiter! Can I order a brief trip into the psychotic mind of John Lennon's killer, a hint of creepy indie-film chill, topped off with a touch of J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*? The killer's inner-conflict as the narrator – it's a good meal. Chow down. *Levi Macallister*

	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
SPIRITUAL RELEVANCY (%)	100	50	40	50	100	100	20	30
OBSCENITIES		12	94	2			90	17
SCENES OF GORE							5	
NUDITY / SEXUALITY							3	1

G2
SLACKER

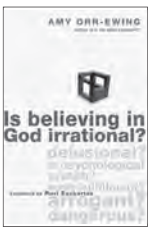
This new gadget is almost as cool as the invention of the iPod. Choose internet stations and playlists at slacker.com and this personal radio player loads them for hours of customized listening pleasure, which can be "refreshed" with a wifi connection. Easy to setup, free to use, awesome! ($199) *DV*

GUITAR HERO® WORLD TOUR
REDOCTANE, ACTIVISION

It's to our benefit that the team behind the original *Guitar Hero®* couldn't stay together, because the ensuing competition furthers innovation. Now *GH* has not only caught up to *Rock Band*, but made some excellent improvements, like the slide controller that allows for tapping notes; recording studio to compose originals; and the new online competition rules. ($179) *DV*

Please God Save Us
Derek Hess & Kent Smith – Strhess Press

Anything printed and presented for commerical retail with Derek Hess' name on it has my attention, due to his fine reputation and the quality of his poster art. (Did you know he illustrated our 100th cover?). This 110-page book illustrated with his up-to-this-point-rare politically-charged artwork is worthy of attention for another important reason – because it directly addresses many of the issues that have turned off large portions of our culture towards God and His people (the church). Hess' political pieces from the last eight years offer strong images that bring life to the political arguments of his book partner, Kent Smith. While some of his liberal vs. conservative arguments leave a little to be desired, the indictments should be heard and understood by the right, for it could unlock keys to revival. It was fascinating to read their take on the religious right, because it seemingly comes from somewhat of a sympathetic (or, at worst, a fairly empathetic) pen. *Doug Van Pelt*



Is Believing in God Irrational?
Amy Orr-Ewing – IVP

I'm not one for apologetics. Maybe I should care more, I don't know. I've always been the dude that doesn't have the theological answers, just the emotive conclusions to sensual ramifications. Amy Orr-Ewing covers both, in relation to one another, and I've got to say it derived some conviction to the fact that I am ignorant to an extent of my faith. Outlined in topical, almost question/answer format, she compares and contrasts everything from cause and effect of sin nature, God as a psychological crutch, intolerance, (God-forbid) hell, and even the age-old question, "Why does God let bad things happen to good people" – from both atheistic and theistic perspectives. It doesn't come across as Christian spewing on other philosophical problems while seeking to distract from unanswerable questions in our own system. Rather, it's an honest approach to the questions we all seek as a disagreeing lump of people. *Levi Macallister*

01

02

02

03

04

05

Gadgets
Slacker, RedOctane/Activision, Balanzza, Logi-Tech, Digital Praise, Skull Candy, Ultimate Ears, & Future Sonic

Balanzza (01) is a custom scale that straps onto your suitcase that, with a lift, gives a clear digital readout of its weight. Quite handy ($24). Logi-Tech's **Alto** (02) notebook stand offers ergonomic functionality, a keyboard and multiple USB ports. Yes! ($99) Evangelical subcultural concerns aside (03), playing the familiar songs on **Guitar Praise** ($99) is fun. The game has only launched on the PC/Mac platform at present, but sets up easily, has a friendly interface and is very similar to its *Guitar Hero®* and *Rock Band™* counterparts. I found it easier to play, with the note-hitting area appearing to come earlier; yet they made it harder by not allowing muted strings to be held while hitting another. Skull Candy's **Pipe** iPod speaker system (04) is small, über-portable, yet delivers a nice, medium-to-small sound ($69). Doing more with less is the strength of Ultimate Ears **Metro. fi 2** headphones (05); the lower range of its quality, heavyweight high-end line ($79). Future Sonic's **Atrio m5** earphones (06), like the other professional-grade earphones reviewed here, come with silicon and squeeze-to-fit foam sleeves to customize and insulate your listening experience. The lightweight acoustical body delivers comfort and punch. ($199) *DV*

[slacker.com, guitarhero.com, balanzza.com, logitech.com, guitarpraise.com, skullcandy.com, ultimateears.com, futuresonics.com]

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art (Part the Fifteenth)

We have, in past issues, endeavored to consider answers to the question of why, in an America wherein reportedly one-fourth to one-fifth of Americans claim to be Evangelical Christians, the American Church produces such a prodigious amount of shoddy and shallow (e.g., bad) art. We have seen that, despite a (somewhat) deserved reputation to the contrary, Evangelicals generally have a tenuous grasp of the content of Scripture, and an even more ephemeral desire to act upon the things they do know from the Bible. Since it is the Word of God which instructs the believer in righteousness, so that he can be "thoroughly equipped" for "every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17), and since "every good work" inescapably includes doing art, which every Christian artist is called to do, an ignorance or facile understanding of the Bible inevitably cripples such an artist in his calling to produce art to God's Glory, resulting in just the sort of inauthentic, shallow art which dominates the artistic output of Evangelical Christianity in our time.

A mistaken grasp of the Doctrines presented in God's Infallible Word results in predictable deficiencies in views and practices of art. As we've seen in past articles, a poor view of God as Sustaining Creator leads to a denigrated view of the value of matter, which is the raw stuff from which art is constructed, and results as well in views of reality which conflict with that presented in Scripture. Any art predicated on these doctrinal bases will be compromised.

We looked previously as well at the implications of unbiblical views of Eschatology (the doctrine of the end and purposes of history), which have resulted in seeing history and time as both evil and theaters of Satan's victory (rather than as the theater in which God irresistibly accomplishes His Will), producing art which is only escapist and retreatist. Deficient eschatologies also result in a lack of the valuation of the development of skills over time, opting rather for an unbiblical preference for the quick-fix, and the aping of popular artists (generally not Christians), who did take the time to develop and become great (though the quick-fix artists are generally inferior copies, to the embarrassment of the Faith…).

We also began to investigate the implications of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, seeing that a lack of understanding of God's Tri-Personed Unity leads to a lack of understanding of the nature of symbols, which God created both to reveal Himself to the world and to reflect both the Unity and the Diversity of the Holy Trinity in their combination of both unified and diversified meanings simultaneously (the One and the Many together in balance). This lack of understanding of symbols can't help but to negatively affect art, since symbols are the building blocks of any sort of artistic expression.

That symbols, like the Holy Trinity, function so mysteriously leads us to our next consideration, that of the place of Mystery in the Nature of God's Triune Being. It is always to be remembered that men have been created in God's Image (Gen. 1:26-28), intended by God to reflect their Maker both in His Unity and in His Diversity. Exactly how God exists as One Being in Three Persons is one of the Great Mysteries of life, a Mystery which is replicated in small, creaturely fashion in mankind (who is also a unified being of three parts: body, soul, and spirit). There are, of course, other implications of the Great Mystery of God involved in the Image of God in mankind. We are intended to understand that, while God is the Greatest of All Mysteries, man made in God's Image is a little mystery.

Men are not simplistic machines subject to simplistic techniques or quick-fix formulas, but, as little mysteries made in the Image of the Mysterious God, must be seen and addressed in terms which reflect that innate mystery. Art is, of course, a perfect medium for representation of, appeal from, and the necessary aspects of mystery, both in its message for, and depictment of, the mysterious life of mankind.

All too often, Evangelicals have reduced the mystery inherent in man, and presented art which is simplistic and propagandistic in appeal, representing the life of man as a uni-dimensional, flat reality, denuding the life of man of its deep, essential mystery, and denigrating the Gospel, the depiction of the God of Mystery, and the symbols of His Presence in worship before God's Face.

One of the antidotes to such an artist travesty, and to the blasphemy inherent in such travesties, is to turn in repentance to a whole-hearted embrace of the Trinitarian Mystery of the Living God, and an honest representation of that Mystery across the entire spectrum of the artistic expression of God's Mysterious Creation, especially as that Creation relates to God and His Little Mirrors, the men made in His Image.

[kempercrabb.net]

The way I see it
Chris Wighaman

I have two dogs. I know, I know you want to hear about my dogs about as much as I want to hear about the band you used to be in when you were in high school, but hang with me here. We got our first dog three years ago when my wife told our son that we were moving away from everything he knew and loved. He welled up in tears and she responded with the promise of a puppy. Well, "Santa" made good on that promise the next Christmas and a little Joy was brought into our lives. Joy is smart and loveable. She rings a bell when she needs to go outside and rubs on your legs like she's a giant sized cat. Two years later my wife decided that Joy was lonely and we either needed another baby in the house or a puppy friend for her. Those were seriously the choices. Needless to say I told her I thought another puppy would be a fantastic idea. In just a few short weeks, rather than nine months, we found ourselves with a puppy named "Boo". Boo is great, she's just like Joy in every way except she has way more attitude. We quickly found out that Boo has a problem. Boo is a poo addict. The dog will eat its own poo if left to do so. Apparently this is fairly common in most dogs, but it is so disgusting. My neighbors probably think I am crazy when I come running out the back door yelling "Boo put that poo down!" or "Boo, quit eating that poo!" We actually had to go buy some tablets that we mix in her food, which are supposed to make her poo taste bad. [Pause while you mull that over.] Which is odd, because I can't imagine how poo all by itself can taste anything but gross, so how do these tablets make it taste worse? Of all the things I thought might be unpleasant about owning a dog, I didn't imagine that this would be our biggest problem. Why do dogs do such disgusting things?

The Bible talks a little about the gross things that dogs do. In Proverbs 26 it says:

As a dog eats its own vomit,
so fools recycle silliness.

—[The Message]

Dogs return to the messes they make over and over again, eating, puking it up or pooing, only to come back later for thirds. We all have made messes in our lives. The messes we make are strangely attractive to us. We are drawn to them. The problem is when we are weak and go back repeatedly to those messes and get involved in them all over again. This is not the way we were meant to live. Galatians 5 says, "Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand!" This dog life isn't what Christ intends for us; he has led us to freedom over our perverse desire to make messes. At some point we need to recognize our tendencies and take a stand. Stepping away from our sinful self and drawing closer to God to be our strength and guide.

Devotions
with Greg Tucker

God does not change.
–Psalm 55:19

Near my home in Orange County, CA, there is a popular Denny's-type restaurant called Norm's, whose well-known motto states, "we never close." The claim is painted on their signs, emblazoned on their menus, and touted in every radio and commercial ad. "Norm's… we never close!"

They mean it, too. I wake up at 2:00 a.m. most Sunday mornings and make my way to the eatery, where I type feverishly on a Macbook Air to finalize that day's sermon. Sometimes my wife and I will visit late in the evening after being with friends or following a long meeting. Day or night, we never have to wonder if Norm's is open, because, after all, they never close.

In this changing world it's nice to know there are things a guy can count on. Marriages are falling apart, people are losing their jobs, and the economy has us all on a rollercoaster, but the light's always on at Norm's. Or so I thought. Last week I mindlessly pulled on their door and was shocked to hear the thud of metal on metal. A handwritten sign explained, "Due to a plumbing problem, we will reopen at 9:00." Norm's, the place that never closes, was closed.

In Deuteronomy 31:6 God makes a claim only He can keep when He says He will never give up on us. But "never" is a pretty strong word. It means not ever, without exception; 100% of the time, not 99 — and life experience has taught me that even the best-intentioned people fail when they pledge to never do something. But God accomplishes what no mortal can. I've failed Him countless times, yet there is no instance of Him leaving me, even for a moment. Too bad God doesn't have a restaurant.

[Greg Tucker lives in your computer at www.HopeCCA.com]

PICK OF THE LITTER

Randall Shreve

The former GS Megaphone drummer Randall Shreve has been busy with indie rock for a few good years now, launching a small label and spreading his wings musically. 2006 saw the release of his debut solo album, *The Cure For Yesterday*, which tipped the hat of his eclectic musical nature. This new project has him playing guitar, piano, bass, and almost all the members of the keyboard/percussion family (like piano, Rhodes, Hammond, Caliope, melotron, and glockenschpiel). *The Entertainer* is part vaudeville, part piano rock, and boy does it live up to its name. Think Rufus Wainwright, Conor Oberst, Cold War Kids, or Seabird. Lyrically, it's like a dark exploration into doubt and faith and lies and truth. Like good art often does, it might leave the listener with more questions than answers. According to his website, it looks like he's taking this musical undertaking on the road all across the US soon. (Doug Van Pelt)
randallshreve.com

Timbre

Most of us came to know her with her plucked strings contributions to mewithoutYou's last album; but her growing reputation is resting on her ability to write and play beautiful harp compositions. Add to these gentle textures a rich voice, and you've got some killer chill music. Her *Winter Comes To Wake You* album features 10 well-rounded songs. (DV)
myspace.com/timbre

Fades Away

You'll Never Take Me Alive starts like a concept album that juxtaposes a declaration of a freedom about to be fought as it's accompanied by a gentle piano vibe that adds anticipation, not too unlike Eminem's "Loose Yourself," but don't think this is rap rock. There's a little nu metal influence a la Linkin Park, but the band brings aggression with chugging guitars and the ocassional leads. (DV)
fadesaway.com

Long Live The Smoking Gun

Meaty, heavy and Southern metal is the general idea when this 2-man outfit enters the studio for indie label 1912 Records. RIYL P86 & Maylene. (DV)
myspace.com/1912records

Haydon Spenceley

He's part pop, part electronic, but this guy's music is too good to ignore. Imagine a slower tempo (and simpler, if possible) Mute Math. He does some crooning, but his pipes are golden and smooth. (DV)
myspace.com/haydonspenceley

Fallstar

The second I saw these guys explode live, I knew they deserved a pick in the mag. They freakin' rip it up! With chunka'chunk punch-you-in-the-chest grinds, powerful gutteral vocals, an engaging frontman, and sonic integrity, Fallstar still has some to learn, but they're going places. (Levi Macallister)
myspace.com/fallstar

Inexordium

For most of us, all that needs to be said here is: "This extreme metal band is made up of drummer Jayson Sherlock and bassist/vocalist Andrew Tompkins." The talent, experience and metal proficiency inherent there promises an onslaught, and this four-piece (rounded out by guitarists Jason De Ron and Peter Willmott) delivers truly brutal death metal. (DV)
inexordium.com

Mendacity

This progressive metal band from Miami, FL melds clean and distorted guitars like other bands mix scream and clean vocals. Heavy, brutal, and unrelenting. Their 14 years of history shows up in the musicianship. (DV)
myspace.com/mendacityband

Better Left Unsaid

Melodic metalcore that packs a punch lyrically and instrumentally, this band delivers raw, above-the-norm power and are well on their way to crafting the type of art that pulls at the innermost of human emotion through screaming guitars and appropriate melodic, sing/screaming, teeter-totter balance. (LM)
myspace.com/blumusic

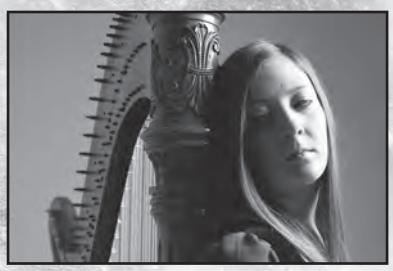
The Status

The Status is ... chillin' in the living room rockin' sweet nothings into my ears with So This Is Progress. With a groovy, incredibly catchy sound, this rock/pop/with-a-hint-of-indie quintet touches everything from the depths of depression to heights untouchable, and has received the most listening time of any independent band I've heard this month in these baby ears of mine. (LM)
myspace.com/thestatus

Searching For Skylines

Very nice alt rock band from Poughkeepsie, NY. Melodic, heavy, hook-filled. Nice vocals, guitar tones, etc, all there. Pretty memorable songs. (DV)
myspace.com/searchingforskylines

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENTS



A BUZZWORTHY AND INDEPENDENT ARTIST THAT YOU HEARD PLAYING HER HARP ON MEWITHOUTYOU'S *BROTHER, SISTER* ALBUM (NAMED TIMBRE CIERPKE) SHARES THE SPOTLIGHT WITH HER DESERVING PEERS – ARTISTS SHE LIKES, ETC. [Photo: Jenna Maurice]

Timbre *myspace.com/timbre*

Cigarette Trees

From Nashville TN, this is one of the most creative bands I've seen in a long time. The band is more of an art project of one Ghostus E. Surveillin, based around a book he is writing. Each member of the band is a character in the book, and the songs are also extensions of the story. Their live show features costutmes, stories read/performed by the band, and songs that range from eerie and dark to heartbreakingly beautiful. It also happens to feature my lovely little sister, Tetra, as Princess Preidie.
myspace.com/cigarettetrees

Dignan

If bands could date, Dignan would be my boyfriend (although they'd have to fight Anathallo for that title ... which would be hard as Anathallo has, like, 800 members). Based out of McAllen, Texas, they are one of the best indie rock bands I've heard. Andy is a talented songwriter with a surprisingly smooth voice, which is joined by keys, accordion, bells, and your standard guitars, bass, and drums. We're planning on having me play on their next record, and I'm stoked! Let's just say that their last cd got stuck permanently in my cd player, and I didn't mind listening to it for a month.
myspace.com/dignan

Umbrella Tree

Also from Nashville, TN, I recorded with these guys last year, and fell in love with their sound. They are dear friends, and one of the most interesting bands I've gotten to play with. Zach's voice has a unique character to it, and his stage presence is so dramatic that it's almost hypnotic. They have a very eclectic mixture of sounds, with a folk writing style, but filled out with plenty of rock and lush instrumentation. Their last record, *The Church and The Hospital*, featured strings, me on harp, and brass, in addition to their regular line up of keys, drums, and guitar. The record is just genius.
myspace.com/umbrellatree

The Winston Jazz Routine

Loosely based in Nashville, TN, this band centers around the amazing songwriting of Nathan Phillips. He recorded vocals on my last record, and I recorded harp on his, *Sospiri*. It was the first time I've ever recorded with a band that already had good harp parts written for me to work with. It was much more of a collaboration that I've had with any other band, and I was really impressed with his grasp of orchestration. Beyond that, he has such a peaceful lulling voice, which is wonderfully emotive. He layers his music with perfectly written instrumentation, and fills his songs with well crafted stories.
myspace.com/thewinstonjazzroutine

Foxhole

This instrumental band from Bowling Green, KY/Nashville adopted me at my first festival 4 years ago. I ended up doing a bit of improv during their set, and have been close friends with them since. They break through the possible monotony that many instrumental bands fall into by creating clear melodies and powerful climactic builds. They use the unique lead voice of a trumpet to set themselves apart. I get really swept up in their music.
myspace.com/foxhole

INSTRUCTIONS: TEAR OUT AND POST IN A PROMINENT PLACE

dear MoM

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Gift Guide
MUSIC, GIFTS & GADGETS

Neal Morse
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Guitar Praise ™
Grab the guitar and jam with the band! Rock out to over 50 songs from top Christian artists, including tobyMac, Relient K, Skillet and more! Includes wireless guitar controller and CD-ROM game with 4 levels of play per song. Onscreen lyrics reflect Christian values. For Windows and Mac computers. [www.guitarpraise.com]

300 Limited Collector's Edition
For those that loved this epic and heroic movie, here is a special package that loads all the extra content from the 2-disc *Special Edition* (including an Easter Egg with original test footage) and adds a bonus disc with a documentary (*To The Hot Gates: A Legend Retold*) about taking the ancient legend through a graphic novel and then onto the big screen. This package was the first DVD we've had that has included an iTunes-ready digital copy of the film, allowing the mind-boggling film to stare at me from my iPod's video screen. In addition to all this, there's a 52-page hardcover art book, a cool 3D lucite display with motion film images and collectible photo cards.

SPIRITUAL RELEVANCY (%)	50
OBSCENITIES	
SCENES OF GORE	11
NUDITY / SEXUALITY	27

The Complete Monty Python's Flying Circus Collector's Edition
Irreverent, silly, poignant; but most of all, side-splitting. The fan of the show can't get a collection any more complete and comprehensive than this one. This is an upgrade from the boxset released a couple years ago, which included the Hollywood Bowl concert and previously unreleased German television episode. To make it even bigger and better this time, they added collections from Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Michael Palin, John Cleese, Graham Chapman, and Terry Jones, which feature candid interviews where the actors reveal what was memorable about the skits that they like quite a bit.

SPIRITUAL RELEVANCY (%)	40
OBSCENITIES	7
SCENES OF GORE	6
NUDITY / SEXUALITY	49

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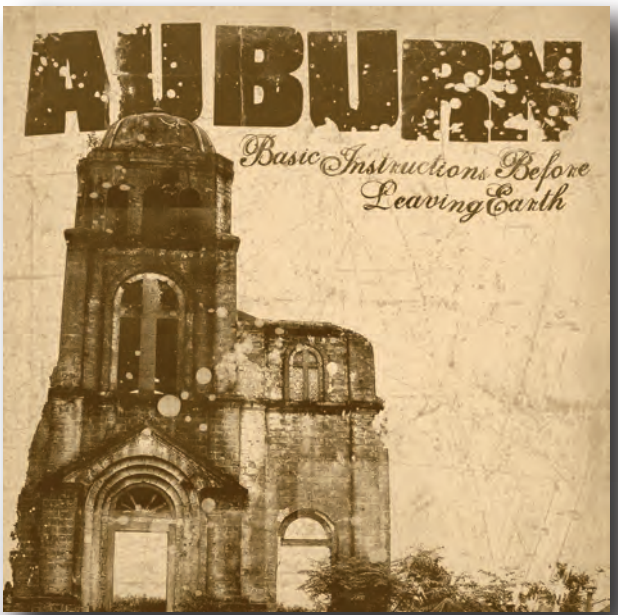

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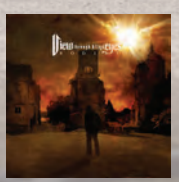

www.myspace.com/hesthehero
www.myspace.com/viewthroughblindeyes
www.myspace.com/fivefootfive

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Sponsor a Child.

Help cut poverty out of a child's life.

And glue hope in its place. When you sponsor a child through Compassion's Christ-centered, church-based ministry, you can help her break free from the vicious cycle of poverty.

Through your sponsorship, a child receives:

- Educational opportunities
- Improved health care
- The chance to hear the gospel

You can also exchange letters with your child so she can be assured of your love and encouragement.

Releasing children from poverty
Compassion® in Jesus' name

Yes! I want to cut poverty out of a child's life.

I prefer: ❑ boy ❑ girl ❑ either

Area of preference: ❑ Africa ❑ Asia ❑ Middle America ❑ South America ❑ any

❑ I want to begin immediately and have enclosed my first sponsorship check as follows:

❑ $32 (one month) ❑ $96 (three months) ❑ $384 (one year)

Credit card: ❑ Visa ❑ MC ❑ Discover ❑ American Express

Card number_____ Exp. date_____ ❑ Charge my credit card monthly.

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

City_____ State____ Zip_____ Phone _____

E-mail _____

Call us toll free at (800) 336-7676 or visit compassion.com/hm.

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WWW.MYSPACE.COM/DROPOFRED | WWW.REDMUSICONLINE.COM | WWW.ESSENTIALRECORDS.COM

SOME THINGS TAKE COMMITMENT: STEPPING ONTO A DANCE FLOOR WHEN THE CROWD IS WATCHING... BEING IN THE SPOTLIGHT WITH YOUR GUITAR WHEN IT'S TIME FOR YOUR SOLO... SIGNING A CONTRACT... GETTING MARRIED... DEMOLISHING A WALL AT THE START OF A REMODELING PROJECT...

For some people, listening to Underoath might be the closest commitment of faith in Christ that they are willing to make at this time. For various reasons (like past bad experiences) they might hesitate or fear to make a commitment to this belief in God thing. Sometimes a long journey moves along by small steps.

FEAR OF COMMITMENT, HOWEVER, COULD VERY WELL KEEP THEM FROM EXPERIENCING WHAT THEY REALLY NEED.

One skeptic might very well say to another, **JUMP IN.**